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ABSTRACT

The 2 issues in this volume contain 10 articles on rural libraries and information access in rural America. Topics include telecommunications and distance education in Nebraska, the future of small rural public libraries, federal programs to improve rural access to information, outreach issues for public libraries, and the role of information in rural economic development. Articles are: (1) "How Nebraska Has Responded with Telecommunications and Long-Distance Education" (Timothy Lynch); (2) "Infoglut, Democracy, and Sustainability: Futures for the Small Public Library" (Michael Marien); (3) "The Role of the United States National Commission on Libraries and Information Science in Assisting Rural America" (Jane Williams); (4) "How Far Does Outreach Reach?" (John Philip); (5) "And What Do We Do Now?" (Robert N. Case); (6) "Role of Information in Rural Economic Development: A Legislative Perspective" (Jonathan Johnson); (7) "The Use of State Information Resources" (Howard F. McGinn); (8) "Key Issues in Rural Development" (Daryl Heasley); (9) "The Rural Information Center: Federal and State Cooperation Expands Information Access" (Patricia La Caille John); and (10) "Technology: Crisis for Rural America" (Kenneth P. Wilkinson). Some papers contain references. (SV)

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This edition of rural libraries contains texts of speeches presented at two 1992 conferences pertaining to rural and small public libraries: Information and Rural Economic Development: Infrastructure and The 21st Century: The Future of Rural and Small Public Libraries. For convenience, conference information has been included in the brief biographical paragraphs which appear at the end of each text.

HOW NEBRASKA HAS RESPONDED WITH TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND LONG-DISTANCE EDUCATION

by

Timothy Lynch

Nebraska is not unlike many of its neighboring states to the west. With a large land area of 77,355 square miles, and 459 miles across, it is the 15th largest in the United States. Almost four-fifths of the population of 1,584,617 (1990 census) live in the eastern third of the state, with the two urban communities of Omaha and Lincoln containing 34 percent of the total state population. Our state government, which incidentally is the only nonpartisan unicameral in the country, struggles with the questions of rural/urban services. Our library community struggles with the same questions. The Nebraska Library Commission is charged with working with and improving all types of libraries, fostering communication and cooperation between those libraries to provide the information needed by the citizens of our state. With 269 official public libraries, 838 school districts comprising 1,485 schools, a four-campus regent-governed University system, a state college system of three institutions, and a large number of special libraries, we are hardly resource poor. Yet the challenge to improve access to these resources is always there.

In this presentation, I will, with some amount of pride, attempt to show you cause to "look to Nebraska."

Before I begin to comment on our distance learning programs, I have been asked to comment on the Public Library Board Certification program. The Public Library Board Certification Program, begun in May of this year, is a new program designed to complement the Public Librarian Certification Program which was instituted in 1987. Together these two programs are part of the Public Library Accreditation program, also instituted in 1987. The purpose of the library board certification program is to encourage library boards to realize the importance of continuing education for themselves, to encourage cooperation within the library board, and thereby strengthen the library. The twist on this program is that the board is certified, not individual board members. The board as whole must determine how they are going to meet the requirements for recertification. As far as we know, this approach has never been tried before. To be recertified, each library board must complete 20 hours of continuing education within three years. We have defined "continuing education" very loosely, allowing for the board to have much flexibility. While these requirements for recertification may not seem rigorous, the twenty hours is twenty times more than what many of our library boards have done in the past. This program has been met with great enthusiasm by many of our librarians, especially in the rural areas. After taking our basic skills training, they felt that their library boards needed similar training. The program was endorsed by the Trustees, Users and Friends Section of the Nebraska Library Association.

For the past two years the Nebraska Library Commission has been working with Nebraska Educational Television to deliver continuing education programs over satellite. In 1990 the state of Nebraska leased a full-time satellite transponder for educational and public service programming. In 1991, the state assured the continuation of educational telecommunications services into the next century by purchasing a transponder, making Nebraska the first state to purchase a dedicated multiple channel transponder for statewide educational use involving all sectors of education. The network, NEB*SAT, is establishing a comprehensive and coordinated network of originating and receiving sites across the state. NEB*SAT is designed to provide four distinct and concurrent services:

Network 1 (Public Television and Radio Service)

Network 2 (Instructional Service)

Network 3 (Compressed Video Service)

Network 4 (Fiber Optic Service)

At this time, the Nebraska Library Commission uses Networks 2 and 3 as a means to deliver its continuing education program. Network 2 is a broadcast quality channel which provides statewide distribution of distance learning and continuing education programming for all sectors of formal education, as well as in-service and continuing education. Network 3 uses compressed video technology which enables transmission of video and audio signals between origination and reception sites, allowing for 12 simultaneous one-way or six two-way interconnections. Compressed video omits certain detail, and because transmission requirements are reduced significantly, more compressed signals can be carried on the transponder.

I admit to a lack of knowledge in the area of technology, preferring to focus on how the technology can work for us. In 1991, we offered over forty hours of continuing education programming over the network. We began offering our 48 hour basic skills training for librarians without a MLS degree over satellite in 1991. In addition, the Nebraska Library Commission beams up a monthly satellite program on library issues. We have used the network for library system board training, as well as other specialized training events. With the total cost of getting the program up on the satellite under $75 per hour, the question is no longer if we should use the technology. Instead it is, "Can we afford not to use the technology?"

We have learned a great deal over the past two years. Our first production was just that, a "production," the annual Nebraska Library Commission Children's Conference. It was held in August 1990. We took a great leap, not really knowing what we were getting into. We used a remote site for broadcast, had a production crew, a director, a great deal of wire and lots of jittery people. It was expensive, costing over $3000, but as I continually pointed out to my director, they couldn't have sent me to a better workshop on distance learning.

We now use a classroom outfitted with three cameras, run by one technician. We strive to make the experience low-key to reduce the anxiety of the presenters. We view the receive sites as extensions of our workshops. The instructors of the basic skills classes put a great deal of effort into drawing the students in remote sites into the discussions. Remote sites are connected by a telephone bridge. While we are constantly thinking about new ways to increase involvement, we are satisfied that the students in the remote sites are indeed learning. This past spring, we offered a twelve hour basic skills class on cataloging. One hundred students enrolled in the eight downlink locations. A facilitator was hired at each of the larger locations. Evaluations have been positive from all sites.

Our monthly satellite programs were designed to be a low effort, low cost delivery of programming on library issues. We have no sets, no directors, just a program. Our topics have included such subjects as the Americans With Disabilities Act, the White House Conference, and Intergenerational Programming. No registration is required. Downlink sites are arranged throughout the state to provide for those who do not have satellite dishes. Again, we try to keep the programs low key. It is difficult to tell who is watching these monthly programs. We do know that people are taping the programs and using them for staff development. Starting in July of this year, we will be packaging these programs into series for marketing purposes. Our first series will focus on Economic Development. The topics are: *Economic Development Principles and Its Language*; *Nebraska ON-LINE*; *Business Reference*; *Building Community Coalitions*; *Schools and Economic Development* and *Using Government Documents for Information*. In January 1993, we will begin a series on leadership skills development.

We primarily use the broadcast quality Network 2. However, by using Network 3, we were recently able to broadcast one of our monthly programs using speakers at two different locations in the state. Because the presentations didn't include any movement, the compressed video technology worked rather nicely.

Future plans include computer instruction over satellite. We plan to use a telecommunications software which will allow us to control the output on the remote computer screen. An overhead camera will allow the students to see what is being typed. Again using compressed video, the student and instructor will be able to see each other. We are particularly interested in pursuing the use of this technology because of the amount of training we do as an OCLC network. We also plan to broadcast a program from North Carolina and Lincoln as part of our North Carolina/Nebraska partnership.

Since September 1991, the Nebraska Library Commission has been hosting a week-end intensive graduate library science program from the School of Library and Information Management, Emporia State University. We are currently investigating the possibilities of offering some of that instruction using satellite technology.

We continue to learn about distance learning, and by no means consider ourselves experts on the topic. We are however, excited about what the technology enables us to do. We are learning by experimenting. Watch us.

My final comments will address the development of Nebraska ON-LINE. In 1991, the Nebraska Library Commission was invited to be part of a project intended to aid those involved in economic development in our state. This initiative, the Nebraska Development Network, is Nebraska's development organizations working together to create and support community-based economic development. The Network helps communities, businesses, and local governments to link with the right resources. More than 100 public and private development organizations are members of the Network. Members are committed to helping communities focus their public resources on effective actions that create and improve the quality of the local business environment — labor, finance, business services, physical infrastructure, technology and government. The Network also helps communities train leaders and prepare strategic plans, helping to ensure that Nebraska communities can successfully compete in the global economy.

Nebraska ON-LINE is the information component of the Network providing a variety of information and communication services to economic development professionals, librarians, educators, entrepreneurs...to all Nebraskans. Nebraska ON-LINE is designed to provide access to a wide range of databases, unique information resources, directories, news services, and other resources. It also provides services designed to facilitate communication among participants, including an events calendar, electronic discussion groups and electronic mail system.

The roots of Nebraska ON-LINE can be found in statewide strategic initiatives that have occurred during the late 1980's and into the 1990's, culminating in the Nebraska Pre-White House Conference on Library and Information Services. The conference theme, *Nebraska Information Partnerships,* indicated the expectation of future initiatives. Public and private partnerships, rural issues, information resources and networking all contributed to initiatives which grew out of the Nebraska Information Partnerships conference. Early contacts with key aides to Nebraska's new governor, Ben Nelson, contributed to involvement of the Nebraska Library Commission in rural development and statewide economic development. State Senator Sandy Scofield, who became the Governor's Chief of Staff, and Steve Buttress, who became the Director of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development were among a team of Nebraskans who participated in a 1989 Western Council of State Libraries conference, *The Role of Information in the Economy of the West.* That conference contributed ideas and a foundation for the Nebraska Information Partnerships conference. A meeting with Don Macke, the Director of the Rural Development Commission, after the Nebraska Information Partnerships conference resulted in Macke's concept paper *Nebraska's Development Information Partnership.* The Nebraska Library Commission is the lead agency for this important component of the Network. Our Computer Applications Team has developed a microcomputer-based information service, using standard off-the-shelf hardware and software throughout. This allows taking advantage of the massive base of personal computer hardware and software, and its competitive pricing, and allows a great deal of flexibility in future developments. Access is via a personal computer, a modem, and a telephone line. While anyone with these can gain access to the service, a group of intermediaries, including librarians, Cooperative Extension Agents, and local public utility staff, will be trained and advertised as access points to the service.

The following services are scheduled for immediate release in Phase I:

A. Development Services Directory

A services directory of statewide or local organizations and services will connect Nebraskans with community, economic and human development assistance. This information and referral directory can be easily searched by service, city, county, organization or contact person name, or any keyword.

B. Calendar of Events

A calendar of events, open for listings from all organizations, will keep development professionals and volunteers across the state informed about meetings, training sessions, workshops, and other events. The calendar can be easily searched by date, keyword or type of event, including Agriculture, Business, Economic Development, Education, History, Humanities, Libraries, etc.

C. Electronic Publishing

An Electronic Publishing System will create a statewide "blackboard" to encourage community-to-community and region-to-region information sharing through a computerized newsletter, announcements and press release system.

D. Bulletin Board Referral System

A bulletin board referral directory, listing other computerized communication systems, will refer Nebraskans to a wide range of information from a variety of electronic bulletin boards and other electronic services, including information on business research and development, agricultural development and marketing, educational innovations and other topics.

E. Nebraska Development Network Description

Development Network information, describing how the network creates and supports opportunities for regional and local community, economic and human development, will include instruction on how to best use the information and communication services, as well as a broad range of network information.

The following services are scheduled for release in Phase II.

A. Electronic Message Service

The electronic communication system will serve as a statewide electronic message center, encouraging the exchange of information through instant e-mail "letters and telegrams" and key-topic conferencing.

B. Informational Databases

Information Databases will be available on a wide range of subjects, including census, legislation, marketing, etc. and can be downloaded on a computer or printed on a printer.

A variety of future enhancements are envisioned including access to a wide range of additional CD-ROM and on-line databases. Nebraska ON-LINE is intended to eventually enable international communication access, allowing Nebraskans to interact with other electronic systems around the world.

Initial testing of Phase I services began in March with the library commission staff serving as the beta test group. Testing with an external test group, representing other target groups, is set to begin this month.

Nebraska ON-LINE offers a new generation electronic information service, serving the needs of statewide economic development activity and library applications. Its flexible design features allow for further development. It is expected that Nebraska ON-LINE will help position libraries as key partners in community and economic development activities and contribute to Nebraska's future.

At the time of this presentation, Mr. Lynch was the Coordinator, Continuing Education for the State Library of Nebraska. He is currently serving as the Director for Circulation at the Anchorage Memorial Library in Alasaka. The above speech was given June 6, 1992 at the Information and Rural Economic Development: Infrastructure *jointly sponsored by the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship, the National Agricultural Library, and the U.S. Department of Education in cooperation with the Department of Library Science, Clarion University of Pennsylvania.*

INFOGLUT, DEMOCRACY, AND SUSTAINABILITY: FUTURES FOR THE SMALL PUBLIC LIBRARY

by

Michael Marien

It is a great pleasure to be with you here this morning. This is the third "Future of Rural and Small Public Libraries" conference to be held by the irrepressible Bernie Vavrek, and the second one that I have attended.

After all the weird things that I said two years ago at the first conference in Omaha, I wonder why Bernie has asked me back. I have two theories as to why. The more obvious explanation is that I am probably the only person in the entire world who is both a full-time futurist (someone who thinks about probable, possible, and preferable futures) and a trustee of a small and somewhat rural library (for your info, it's in a town of 5,000 people and one traffic light, located at the edge of the Syracuse metro area.)

This would appear to be a dynamite combination for a conference on the future of rural and small public libraries. Certainly, it would seem, I must have something wise to say about the future of small libraries. And if I didn't say it two years ago, then perhaps Bernie is generously still hoping that I might yet come up with some useful spark to light your fire and make it all worthwhile.

The second theory as to why I am here has to do with my earlier presentation in Omaha when I touched a lot of bases and apparently avoided stepping on any toes. At least no one threw any corncobs or discarded books at me. But in going for breadth, I may have left everyone confused as to what exactly I was trying to say. So I wonder if Bernie has politely invited me back to get it right this time, and I am appreciative of this second chance in the land of cactus, rather than corncobs.

My earlier presentation was entitled *The Small Library in an Era of Multiple Transformations.* And, indeed, there are many social, political, economic, technological, and ecological transformations in progress. This time, I would like to focus on three interrelated themes that were buried in that first, rambling presentation: the inexorable growth of information overload or infoglut, the subtle decline of democracy in advanced societies, and the new quest for a sustainable global future in the face of a vexing mega-cluster of environmental problems. These are three very large ideas, but please bear with me. I will try to explain how they are important, how they are interrelated, and how they are central to the future of rural and small public libraries – and, indeed, how they should underlie any strategizing that you pursue.

INFOGLUT AND THE END OF PROGRESS

The first of the three major themes that I wish to emphasize is the ever-growing onslaught of information, or infoglut. I contend that this is "the mother of all information problems," ultimately at the root of every library and information society problem that you can think of. Yet, of the 100 policy proposals made by the 1991 White House Conference on Library and Information Services (WHCLIS), not a single one was directly addressed to the pervasive problem of coping with infoglut. Library leaders are good at addressing the smaller problems. But they have yet to develop the capacity to look at the forest as well as the trees: to view libraries in the context of a burgeoning information sector in a complex and changing society–and to fearlessly ask whether, overall, this information sector is helping or hurting society. I'm concerned with this problem because I'm interested in all problems and possibilities, and how they relate to each other. Specifically, I have been struggling with infoglut for the past 14 years, as editor of an abstract journal, Future Survey, which attempts to identify the multi-disciplinary literature on trends, forecasts, and policy proposals in all areas of concern. As an information broker I am fully aware that I simultaneously relieve people of part of their scanning task, while at the same time adding to their information oppression by pointing out more and more important books, reports, and articles that must be read. I regret to say hat even I am slowly succumbing to the deluge.

Ask any professional in any field–even semi-professionals and everyday citizens–about coping with the rising flood of information relevant to their work, their community, and their family, and you will invariably get a worried frown of recognition. We all face this problem of too much information, and, in varying degrees, we're all going bonkers trying to keep up. WHCLIS and many other library professionals, however, seem to think that more access and literacy are the critical problems- so that everyone can have an equal opportunity to go bonkers. I'm not against demand-side measures that enhance individual capacities and enable access for all to the wonderful world of information. But sooner or later we will have to also consider the supply-side problem of infoglut.

The basic background to this problem is easy to understand: more people, spending more time, communicating in more ways, in more communities. First, more people: world population has grown from 2 billion in 1930 to 4 billion in 1975. It will hit 6 billion in 1998 and 8 billion in 2020. That's a lot of people! (Just keep this basic fact of the future in mind by saying "2, 4, 6, 8 – think of how we populate"). Secondly, more of these people are going to schools and colleges, and then entering information-related professions, which are a major component of the emerging service society. Thirdly, in addition to more people going scribble, scribble, scribble (or, nowadays, tap, tap, tap), there are more media options: print, computer terminals, data bases, fax machines, E-mail, cable TV, videotapes, audiotapes, etc. And lastly, the number of communities in which we participate has expanded; notably, we increasingly live in a global society, and thus global issues increasingly deserve our attention, as well as national, regional, state, local, and neighborhood issues.

In *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (Knopf, Feb. 1992), Neil Postman of New York University argues that the tie between information and human purpose has been severed. We are a culture consuming itself with information, he says, assuming that information is our friend. But "cultures may also suffer grievously from information glut, information without meaning, information without control mechanisms." He adds that technology increases the supply of information; when the supply is no longer controllable, a general breakdown in psychic tranquillity and social purpose occurs. Technopoly is what happens when the defenses against infoglut have broken down.

Postman is a well-known critic of the media. A little-known sociologist, Orrin E. Klapp, formerly of The University of Western Ontario and now at San Diego State University, probably has written the most on what I call the infoglut problem. In *Opening and Closing: Strategies of Information Adaptation in Society* (Cambridge, 1978), Klapp employs Sisyphus as an allegory for "an information-overloaded society," and points to the anomaly of information mounting hand-in-hand with societal problems; indeed, "accumulating past a point, it becomes part of the problem." Opening and closing ourselves to information, he argues, is "part of a shifting strategy to get the most of the best information and the least of the worst noise." (p.20)

In a subsequent book, *Overload and Boredom: Essays on the Quality of Life in the Information Society* (Greenwood, 1986), Klapp explains how a society becomes boring because of huge loads of information. In the condition of infoglut, information degrades by becoming noiselike, and by becoming sterile and redundant, making life flat and insipid. The problem is most severe in the cities, he notes, which questions the notion common among urbanites that boredom is mostly a problem of small towns and rural backwaters. "There is no evidence that people yawn more in small communities than in big ones." (p.4) And so a troubling caution to you well-intended people who seek to bring more information and presumably progress to rural areas: the costs of overload may well outweigh the benefits at some point.

I know of no counter argument to the infoglut problem posed by Postman, Klapp, and others. Information and library professionals seem to ignore the infoglut problem, or to downplay it. It is easy to do so because; 1) the problem is large and multi-disciplinary (thus one hopes that someone else will pay attention to it); 2) it is fuzzy and ill-defined (and the positivist quest for "scientific" precision, by the techno-twits of the information society, still lingers); 3) it is not readily solved or even ameliorated (at a time when quick and easy "solutions" are in demand); and 4) it is just damn depressing (in a culture that still prefers to think of upbeat, positive trends and futures). Again, I make my unhappy assertion that infoglut is the mother of all information society problems. If you continue to ignore the overload problem, while peddling more and more information, seeking only to get it more quickly to more people, you are nothing more than handmaidens to disaster.

DEMOCRACY RISING–AND FALLING?

My second major theme concerns trends in self-governance. Doubtlessly we can all agree that democracy, for all its flaws, is preferred to other forms of government. Much has been written about democracy, but two points are important to my argument. First, democracy is predicated not only on participation by citizens, but on informed participation. People in library and information professions seem to be aware of this to a degree, by frequently invoking some association between democracy and the state of library funding. The second point is that democracy is more realistically viewed as a relative condition, rather than an absolute like a light bulb that is either on or off. Yet many people, including some political scientists, employ this simplistic notion that we have a democracy and that's that. Such a view invites complacency, and discourages thinking and action about the many ways in which democracy can be strengthened, and well as perceiving erosion in our democratic condition.

Judging from recent literature that I have reviewed in *Future Survey*, our democracy has been corrupted and diminished in recent years–a remarkable irony at a time when we are celebrating the birth of fledgling democracies around the world, notably in Eastern Europe and the former USSR. I will cite a dozen titles:

- In *Who Will Tell the People: The Betrayal of American Democracy* (Simon & Schuster, May 1992), William Grieder deplores the "mock democracy" that replaces the will of the people with information management by specialists in controlling the political process.
- Similarly, pollster Daniel Yankelovitch, in *Coming to Public Judgment: Making Democracy Work in a Complex World* (Syracuse University Press, May 1991), points to the need for a "deliberative democracy" in contrast to a mere representative democracy; this requires strengthening the public's abilities to contribute to self-governance and to counter the Culture of Technical Control.

- In *A Dream Deferred: America's Discontent and the Search for a New Democratic Ideal* (Beacon Press, May 1991), Philip Slater thoughtfully points to many avenues in which we can build a new megaculture of democracy.
- In *Democracy Without Citizens: Media and the Decay of American Politics,* (Oxford UP, 1989), Duke political scientist Robert M. Entman argues that the free market of ideas is not nourishing US democracy, and that Americans do not know more about politics now than they did 20 years ago.
- Eric Smith echoes this view in *The Unchanging American Voter,* (U of California Press, 1989), arguing that the public's level of knowledge has not changed since 1956.
- In *Dirty Politics: Deception, Distraction, and Democracy* (Oxford, 1992), Kathleen Hall Jamieson describes how drama has overrun data, and vilification has replaced argument.
- In *Feeding Frenzy: How Attack Journalism Has Transformed American Politics* (Free Press, 1991), Larry J. Sabato of the University of Virginia argues that the modern press has trivialized discourse and warped the democratic process.
- In *All of the People, All of the Time: Strategic Communication and American Politics* (M.E. Sharpe, 1991), Jarol B. Manheim of GWU points to the growing trend to manage or circumvent the news, resulting in a "democracy of the uninformed".

And the last four books that I cite here all indict the trend toward getting our political information from television:

- *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues* by Shanto Iyengar of UCLA (U of Chicago Press, Oct 1991) describes how the episodic framing of issues by TV propagates a false sense of national well-being.
- *Television and the Crisis of Democracy* (Westview, 1990), by Douglas Kellner of the University of Texas, claims that the media, especially television, have subverted the very foundations of democratic government.
- In a steamy polemic entitled *The Unreality Industry* (Birch Lane, 1989), Ian I. Mitroff and Warren Bennis, both professors at the University of

Southern California, attack the deliberate creation of unreality by TV and other vehicles of mass communication and entertainment as "one of the most pivotal social forces shaping our time".

- Finally, Neil Postman of NYU again socks it to us in *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (Viking, 1985).

Please forgive this lengthy list, but I want to emphasize an important point that something is very, very wrong with our democracy. And the public knows it too, judging by the widespread discontent over the course of the recent presidential election. I know of no counter argument that these writers are wrong, or that our democracy is getting any stronger (although it should be noted, hopefully, that press coverage of the 1992 election was better than in 1988, perhaps because so many journalists, citizens, and Democrats were on the lookout for "Willie Horton" pseudo-arguments). And we can be thankful–and hopeful–that we now have a President-elect who can speak in whole sentences, and a Vice President-elect who not only can read books, but can write them. So perhaps certain negative trends in recent years have been or will be reversed, or at least slowed. But it is too early to dismiss or downplay these recent arguments of democratic decline–all of which, incidentally, fail to mention the actual and potential role of libraries. I shall do so, but only after introducing the third theme of sustainability.

THE COMING STRUGGLE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The third megaproblem that I want to highlight is the growing global struggle for a sustainable future. The major preoccupation of the forty-year period following World War II was the Cold War between the US and the USSR. With the sudden and unanticipated end of the Cold War and the USSR, we are entering a radically new era. Several writers have suggested that the next few decades will focus on the cluster of global environmental issues as a central preoccupation. As articulated by Vice President-elect Al Gore, "we must make the rescue of the environment the central organizing principle for civilization."

The problems are surely familiar: the threat (if not the reality) of global climate change, destruction of the Earth's ozone layer, destruction of biodiversity, deforestation, soil erosion, degraded wetlands, ocean and coastal pollution, acid precipitation, air pollution, water pollution, indoor pollution, noise pollution, outer space pollution, solid waste, toxic waste, nuclear waste and radiation, electromagnetic pollution, and man- made eco-disasters. And, on top of this is the inexorable growth of world population ("2, 4, 6, 8 – think of how we populate"), which aggravates these problems. Obviously, we cannot continue this industrial era insensitivity to the environment and the humongous costs that we are passing on to future generations.

In the last two decades, and especially in the past five years, there has been a growing consensus that we need a sustainable society and sustainable development, which includes a new ecological economics that acknowledge full costs, environmentally-conscious business, sustainable agriculture, environmentally-appropriate technology and transportation, renewable energy sources and extensive energy conservation, widespread recycling, eco-cities and communities, eco-tourism, environmental literacy taught in schools and colleges, religion that emphasizes stewardship of Creation, and eco-ethics guiding our actions.

The literature on environmental problems and sustainable futures is extensive, and readily illustrates the infoglut problem. For those of you who are info-addicts, I have just published a long biblioessay on the major books and articles appearing in the past five years, citing 312 items in 255 footnotes (*Futures*, 24:8, Oct 1992, 1-33).

Surely, everyone here must know of Al Gore's *Earth in the Balance* (Houghton Mifflin, Jan 1992), the most thoughtful book by any political leader that I have ever seen, and deservedly on the best-seller list because of the author's fame. I'll mention ten other recent, important overview books on global environmental issues to indicate the type of general current affairs reading that any public library that claims to be informing citizens in our democracy should be carrying:

- *The First Global Revolution* (Pantheon, Sept 1991), a report by Club of Rome leaders Alexander King and Bertrand Schneider on the new type of world society that is in formation.

- *Beyond the Limits* (Chelsea Green, April 1992), an update of the 1972 Limits to Growth report to the Club of Rome by Donella H. Meadows et al, arguing that today's human world is dangerously beyond its limits.
- *Saving the Planet: How to Shape an Environmentally Sustainable Global Economy* (Norton, Nov 1991) by Lester R. Brown and his Worldwatch Institute colleagues, who also produce the annual *State of the World* reports in 26 languages and the new annual companion, *Vital Signs*.
- *Saving Our Planet* (Chapman & Hall, Aug 1992), a concise and valuable overview by Mostafa Tolba, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme.
- *Our Country, The Planet: Forging a Partnership for Survival* (Island Press, May 1992), an eloquent Third World view by Shridath Ramphal of Guyana, former Secretary-General of the 50-nation Commonwealth and now President of the World Conservation Union.
- *Imperiled Planet: Restoring Our Endangered Ecosystems* (MIT Press, Oct 1990) by Edward Goldsmith, which includes over 250 striking photographs.
- *It's a Matter of Survival* (Harvard University Press, March 1991) by Anita Gordon and David Suzuki, based on a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation radio series, with the added benefit of large print so Aunt Gladys can get the message.
- *One Earth, One Future* (National Academy Press, Sept 1990) by Cheryl Simon Silver, a non-technical overview of a National Academy of Sciences Forum on Global Change and Our Common Future.
- *The Global Ecology Handbook* (Beacon Press, 1990) by the Global Tomorrow Coalition and Walter Corson, a well-documented overview for college students and the general public.
- *The Population Explosion* (Simon & Schuster, April 1990) by Paul and Anne Ehrlich, which updates Paul Ehrlich's 1968 warning, The Population Bomb by claiming that the bomb has detonated.

I can go on and on, listing many good books in more specialized areas such as the greening of business, sustainable agriculture, recycling, waste management, toxic waste, water pollution, etc. It is the basic, long-term direction that we must and will be pursuing. The critical point is that the best of these books ought to be in all public libraries to empower citizens to understand the key issues that they and their children will be facing. If these books are not featured on a shelf near the checkout desk, I contend that there is a fundamental problem in conceiving what libraries in a modern democracy are about.

MEGAPROBLEMS AND LIBRARIES

I have focused on three key trends that I think are central to the future of rural and small public libraries in the 21st century, which is what this conference is about. First, the ever-growing flood of information, which makes it more and more difficult to keep up. Second, the subtle erosion of democracy and widespread citizen dissatisfaction, coupled with civic ignorance despite the flood of information--or, very likely, because of it. And thirdly, the growth of environmental problems and the imperative of a major multi-faceted transformation to a sustainable society and a sustainable world, which should be a major element of public discourse.

What do rural and small public libraries have to do with these three large megaproblems?

First, all libraries are fighting the battle of infoglut and probably losing. The challenge is to acknowledge to the world that there is such a problem, and then to develop a system of quality filters, reference tools, and resource sharing networks to cope with the flood. I think that small public libraries are important cultural and educational agencies for small communities, especially so if the communities are in remote areas far from larger libraries. In a complex, knowledge-based society, it is important to have user-friendly community information and learning centers. But they must be up-to-date and linked into the wider world. Similar to independent mom and pop grocery stores of the past, they won't help people or stay in business if they dispense info-equivalents of stale bread and sour milk; but they can become the equivalent of convenience chain stores, now found at nearly every country crossroad.

Second, the crisis of democracy in these complex and confusing times presents an opportunity for all libraries, large and small. They can and should assert themselves as the missing leg of a three-legged media stool. In recent years, we have come to think of "the media" as television and newspapers, or even television alone. But the library is also a medium, serving as intermediary between information producers and users. Its role in a democracy has been ignored or underplayed. Television is fine and dandy for sound bites and getting a feel for how our leaders look and talk. Newspapers are important for day-to-day news and brief reports. But libraries are the only place to get information that examines any problem in depth–but only if we want this information, and if we know that it is available. I suspect that the potential of libraries to enhance democracy in this way (and in so doing to enhance their own fortunes) has been far from fully explored.

Third, the megaproblem of a sustainable future should be a featured part of featured current affairs literature in every library, both large and small. Whether or not library patrons have access to Madonna's tawdry sex book, or Rush Limbaugh's spirited but ignorant fulminations, is problematic. But every library should do their best to put patrons in touch with the serious thinking on the major issues of the day, and keep patrons in the democratic loop. The TV talk shows are a new social invention to make people feel in touch with issues, albeit superficially. Why can't libraries follow up with the hundreds of books that provide informed background to these issues?

THREE FUTURES FOR RURAL AND SMALL PUBLIC LIBRARIES

It's easy to articulate such general goals for libraries as coping with infoglut, becoming more visible as an essential democratic institution, and putting citizens in touch with sustainable society issues. But how is this done in a time of shrinking or threatened budgets, when libraries themselves– especially in small communities–may not be sustainable? Consider these three scenarios describing more of the same, how things might get worse, and how things might get better.

More of the Same

This is the most probable scenario, where the basic assumptions of library people remain the same: that all information is good, that infoglut is to be ignored (like Ross Perot's crazy aunt in the basement, which he used to illustrate the deficit), that more access and more literacy are the key issues for library and information services, that American democracy is not endangered, and that there is no long-term crisis of sustainability. I will also assume that the US economy remains about the same, with a few successes here and a few failures there, but with no spectacular overall improvement and continued strain on public budgets. Under these conditions, I see little hope for public libraries to improve their general condition, especially if they continue to present themselves as they now do–a sort of nice but incidental institution where you can borrow books largely for entertainment. Consequently, in the "More of the Same Scenario," the battle against infoglut will be slowly lost, and rural and small libraries–the most vulnerable parts of the system–will be closed or increasingly irrelevant.

Pessimistic Scenario

In this not-so-probable scenario, the basic assumptions of library people also remain the same, but the US and world economy takes a marked downturn, due to the accumulation of neglected problems, including sustainability issues such as waste disposal, pollution, global climate change, and the millions of environmental refugees from countries well beyond their environmental carrying capacity, adding to millions of political and economic refugees, clamoring for a decent life as depicted by newly-available information technology. (I am sure that those who live near the Arizona-Mexico border, for example, are consummately aware of Third World problems pushing up against the relatively affluent First World.) In this negative scenario, the Clinton Administration does not make a significant dent in the deficit, and the collapse of civil order in Russia, added to a dozen or so brushfires around the world, distract from attending to many pressing domestic problems. Public sector funding becomes even tighter, and libraries get financially whacked as much or even more than other institutions.

Optimistic Scenario

In this least probable scenario, library people finally question their basic assumptions, which is always the first step toward significant change. They will then do any and all of the following:

1) Openly and widely acknowledge the problem of infoglut, and set out to identify and feature what Orrin Klapp calls "most of the best information."

2) Follow the lead of nutritionists in the food sector (who warn against too much junk food, empty calories, fat, salt, and cholesterol) and lead a campaign against too much entertainment and junk information from both trade publishers and academia.

3) Point to the crisis of the ill-informed citizen in our complex and troubled society, and insist that libraries must be seen as a major medium where citizens can learn about our major problems in depth, unlike newspapers or television. This can only be done, however, by highlighting important current affairs literature and overcoming the tyranny of the trivial titles on the best-seller lists.

4) Prepare an annual non-partisan "Citizen's Book List" in handsome catalog form, listing some 50-100 of the most important current affairs books published in the past year, as well as 300-500 additional books of the last few years that are still useful in illuminating our many public problems. Unlike deadly-dull bibliographies, this Book List, to be chosen by an expert panel, will be prepared in a handsome annotated format similar to clothing catalogs that flood our mailboxes, and distributed to every public library. Titles selected for the Citizen's Book List will be treated with the same respect as Pulitzer and Nobel Prizes, most of which have little relevance to our public problems.

5) Prepare and widely distribute an annual State of American Information report, with indicators on the information industry, library budget trends, how many libraries are underfunded and understaffed, how many staff people are underpaid and overworked, and how many libraries have been closed or forced into reduced hours. It is difficult to do so, dues to widely varying administrative situations and lack of data. Still, such a report would be invaluable for busy and ill-informed trustees such as myself, who do not know of any guidelines as to what a well- funded, well-staffed, and well-stocked library ought to be for our small community. (Our Town

Board is friendly to our library, but how much should we ask them to give us?) The report should also include scenarios of probable and preferable informational futures, and global indicators of infotrends outside the U.S. It's remarkable–and ironic–how little overall information on information is readily available. The travel and tourism industry now has two annual reports; information people should be able to get it together for at least one annual report.

6) Tie libraries to schools and lifelong learning, insisting that librarians in community information centers should be paid as much as school teachers, and that adult learning is at least as important as the learning of children in schools. This ought to be quite obvious, because many critical public decisions must be made in the next decade, before any of our children get to voting age. If these decisions are informed, we would have a far better chance of shaping a sustainable society for future generations-and a far better chance of sustaining and even improving libraries, both large and small.

I conclude by emphasizing that this positive scenario is the least probable of the three mentioned here. It will require changing assumptions, which is always difficult. It will require considerable cooperation. It will require a much more assertive stance, to overcome the torpor of our "democracy without citizens" and our "democracy of the uninformed." But this scenario could be realized, and we could start now.

Michael Marien is the editor of Future Survey, *World Future Socitey, and President, Board of Trustees, LaFayette Public Library, in LaFayette, New York. The above article is a reprint of his speech given at the third conference in the series,* The 21st Century: The Future of Rural and Small Public Libraries. *The conference was held in Phoenix, Arizona November 19-21, 1992, jointly sponsored by the Arizona Department of Librtary, Archives and Public Records and Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship, in cooperation with the Graduate Library Schoo, University of Arizona and the Department of Library Science, Clarion University of Pennsylvania.*

THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES NATIONAL COMMISSION ON LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION SCIENCE IN ASSISTING RURAL AMERICA

by

Jane Williams

Good morning. I am pleased to bring you greetings and best wishes for a successful conference from the Commission's chairman, J. Michael Farrell, and the Commission's executive director, Peter R. Young. It is a challenge to prepare oneself for a presentation of this type, and I thank you for that opportunity. I hope what I have to say will spark some thought and exchanges of thought during and after this conference.

I want to cover several items:

1. an overview of what the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science is and has done,
2. a summary of two current programs of the Commission that relate to rural America,
3. a quick look back at last year's White House Conference on Library and Information Services,
4. present two other current and future program emphases of NCLIS that pertain to rural libraries as well as others.

WHAT NCLIS IS AND HAS DONE

The Commission is a permanent, independent agency in the executive branch of the federal government. It was established by a 1970 statute (P.L. 91-345). The Commissioners are 14 people appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate for 5-year terms. The 15th Commissioner, and the only *ex officio* member, is the Librarian of Congress.

According to our statute, the Commission has primary responsibility for developing and recommending overall plans and policies related to library and information services adequate to meet the needs of the people of the United States. NCLIS advises the President and the Congress on the implementation of national policy and on the need for cooperation among federal, state and local governments, and public and private agencies, in assuring optimum use of the nation's educational resources.

NCLIS conducts studies, surveys and analyses of the information needs of the nation; appraises the adequacies and deficiencies of current library and information resources and services; evaluates the effectiveness of current library and information service programs; advises federal, state, local and private agencies regarding library and information services; promotes research and development activities, and publishes reports.

Now, compare this glorious, global mandate with the sizes of the Commission's staff and budget. NCLIS' employment ceiling is 12. We now have 5 full-time people on the payroll, plus 2 people on contract. The Commission's budget in the 1993 fiscal year, which began last month, is the highest it's ever been: $889,000.

Let me put this size in the context of the federal government for you because, as you know, the federal government of the United States is like no other context. There is a group called the Small Agency Council. To qualify as small, an agency has to have fewer than 6,000 employees. In a subdivision of the Small Agency Council, called the Micro Agency Group, a federal agency qualifies for membership if it has fewer than 500 employees. Perhaps now one can begin to appreciate the challenges of being among the very smallest of the federal agencies while possessing statutory language of such broad scope.

I like the analogy a visitor to the office recently gave us. That is, rather than bemoaning or belittling the size of our agency, recast our thinking about our approaches and accomplishments as guerilla action. That may be a little far-fetched but, in any case, our smallness does give us advantages of flexibility and quickness of response when compared with the big agencies and departments, and our status as an independent agency gives us the same avenues of access.

Over the years, since the Commission held its first official meeting in September 1971, it has examined diverse issues pertaining to library and information services, such as:

- continuing education needs of library personnel,
- copyright and the revision of legislation in the mid-1970s,
- conduct of the first White House Conference, in 1979,
- reauthorization and extension of the LSCA,
- public and private sector relations,
- library and information services to cultural minorities,
- library and information services for the elderly,
- the role of information in the economy,
- information literacy,
- access to public information,
- a host of legislative initiatives, from paperwork reduction to the recent bills for the Government Printing Office to provide gateways to government information in electronic form.

An important part of the NCLIS statute calls on the Commission to:

> . . .conduct studies, surveys, and analyses of the library and information needs of the Nation, **including the special library and information needs of rural areas,** of economically, socially, or culturally deprived persons, and of elderly persons, and the means by which these needs may be met through information centers, through the libraries of elementary and secondary schools and institutions of higher eduction, and through public, research, special, and other types of libraries.

Based on this statutory responsibility, the Commission established a program focus by forming a National Rural information Services Development Program (NRISD) in the early 1980s. This program was based on a recognition that rural communities required assistance in planning and adapting to rapid social, economic, and demographic change. This assistance involved activities which served to increase the capacity to deliver essential services to rural areas.

The NCLIS program was developed in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Library and other components of USDA,[3] along with the assistance and cooperation of state library agencies, and the Kellogg Foundation. Its goal was actually taken from a national program document that the Commission formulated in 1975 which stated that there was a need to "Ensure that basic minimums of library and information services adequate to meet the needs of all local communities are satisfied" [U. S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, (USNCLIS) 1975].

In 1984 the Commission joined with the USDA and the Extension Service to consider establishment of a National Advisory Board on Rural Information Needs. Throughout this activity, the Commission served as a catalyst and coordinator among the various specialized government agencies, private information system concerns, and the various groups of educators, administrators, and librarians involved. The April 1985 report from the planning committee contains a background section authored by Dr. Vavrek. I'd like to read that section's beginning paragraph, partly because it sounds as though it were written in 1992:

We live in a remarkable society. Coexisting in the same ecosystem are extreme differences. On one hand, we point with deserved pride to the accomplishments of technology — the Space Shuttle, microprocessing, telecommunications – are only a few of these distinct achievements. Linearly, we must observe, however, the opposite end of the spectrum. Poverty, social anomie, despair, etc., remind us of enduring unmet challenges within out fragile human framework. We are also cognizant of the fact that our perceptions about ourselves and our world are conditioned by unrelenting change. Causing this change and likewise symptomatic of it is a phenomenon of dynamic and unyielding proportions – information as an ever expanding and nonconsumable product (USCLIS, 1985, p. 3).

The Intermountain Community Learning/Information Services project operated in four Western states – Colorado, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming. This program was designed to demonstrate that the rural library – two in each state, for purposes of the demonstration – can serve as a learning/information center responding to the personal, business, professional, and governmental information needs of local citizens and organizations through the use of information network links.

To quote from a brochure published on the project:

> Microcomputers and telecommunications are central to the ICLIS strategy. Modern technology is helping to deliver educational offerings from the land-grant universities of Colorado, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming to remote locations. Great distances, state borders, and rugged terrain no longer are barriers to educational opportunity.
>
> Local library learning and information centers linked to university libraries through IBM personal computers now aid students pursuing academic degrees. Community learning specialists electronically coordinate sharing of library resources in the four states and provide online access to commercial data previously not available in the community (IBM Academic Information Systems, 1988).

The Intermountain Community Learning and Information Service represents a four-year (1986-1990) $4.1 million project funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

Important lessons resulted from this involvement in the 1980s. It was learned that the decision-making processes in rural and non-rural communities were not identical and, in certain cases, reflected fundamentally different structures. Working with a decentralized, consensus-based governing and policy-making structure is radically differently from working in the bureaucracy of the federal government. Partnerships including county executive officials and city managers working with expert support staffs are not common in the rural services sector. The absence of local expertise available to advise local officials on a variety of procedures, programs and policies requires a very different information support service approach to assure effective decisions. In short, those involved began to understand that the challenges facing rural residents require information and decision-making structures and tools that are uniquely geared to the culture, environment and climate of rural communities.

TWO CURRENT NCLIS PROGRAMS THAT RELATE TO RURAL AMERICA

Over the years the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science has been involved in many cooperative programs. One of the most important began in 1988 and continues today. It is with the National Center for Education Statistics, part of the U.S. Department of Education, to develop and improve the collection and publication of reliable annual public library statistics. The Library Statistics Program now has components that concentrate on academic, school and state library statistics as well as public.

The public library cooperative statistics program depends on the submission of data by local libraries and the work of the state libraries to collect that data and transmit it to Washington. By the end of August 1992 all state libraries had submitted their 1991 public library data. Staff at the National Center for Education Statistics reported that the data are more complete and better edited than in previous years and that the data from more than half of the states required no further work at all.

The published statistical information is available in paper copy and on diskettes. The latest published data is for 1990 and indicates some interesting things about public library services to small communities. In 1990, almost 62% of the 8,978 public libraries in the U.S. reported that they served populations of under 10,000. 45% of all U.S. public libraries reported that they served populations of under 5,000. In 1990, 79.9% of public libraries served populations of less than 25,000 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1992). This represents an increase of 2% from data available in 1986.

Small community libraries are not minority institutions in America. They constitute, as you already know, the basis for public library services for the majority of the nation's citizens. Those public libraries that serve small populations of under 25,000, however, are challenged to meet growing demands for resources and services. How these libraries cope with the information needs of rural populations in the future depends, in part, on how well and how accurately we can measure their activities now to prepare for the future.

Last fall the Commission sponsored a library research seminar to engage the research community on topics related to public library statistics. Since then other inquiries have been made as well to pursue how the statistics we now have available can be analyzed to help understand and improve public library and information services.

Examples of research topics suggested to date include:

- whether library data (e.g., budgets, sizes of collections, circulation) traditionally collected can be used as measures of impact, effectiveness and quality, or whether a new set of output data is needed;
- what changes have there been in the last 30 years in levels of support from federal, state and local sources and are there differences by region, by urban or rural setting, etc.;
- the expanding phenomenon of home-based information retrieval and what levels of access libraries provide to these forms of information retrieval;
- economic analysis of the impact of the rising costs of materials on libraries' structures and missions;
- in-depth tests of the interrelationship of user location and library location;
- exploration of options for developing data elements for all types of libraries that begin to capture the ways in which technology is transforming library services.

An important factor for future research is last year's creation of a public library universe file, which identifies every public library outlet in the U.S. This new tool will facilitate sample surveys which can target a subset of the nation's 9,000 public libraries to obtain reliable, accurate information about these institutions. For example, we can now target a statistically accurate sample of the public library universe which can be surveyed for per-capita expenses on library resources and services for rural areas, which can be compared with other areas. Special needs and programs can be targeted with a degree of reliability that was previously impossible. How we use these new tools is in the hands of the analysts and researchers who are just now becoming aware that these new data are available.

The second current project that I want to mention is that of library and information services to Native Americans. In the early 1970s, the Commission became aware of reported deficiencies in library and information services to Native Americans. Further investigation undertaken by the Commission led to a series of hearings which revealed serious problems in the ability of institutions and organizations to satisfy the informational needs of the Indian communities.

The Commission's interest in this area helped to bring about the first pre-White House Conference on Native American Library and Information Services, in Denver in 1978. This preconference was held prior to the first White House Conference on Library and Information Services, conducted in Washington, D.C., in 1979. Among the 64 resolutions resulting from the White House Conference was one calling for legislation to provide help in developing library and information services on all Indian reservations, in training library personnel, and in other forms of assistance.

In late 1988 the Commission developed plans for another series of regional public hearings on the condition and needs of library and information services to Native Americans. The purpose of the hearings was to assess and review the changes in the extent and quality of service to the Indian communities since the 1979 White House Conference.

Five hearings were held between 1989 and late 1991, covering every region on the country: Southwest (New Mexico), Northeast (Connecticut), Southeast (Florida), Northwest (Seattle) and Alaska. In conjunction with the hearings, Commission members and staff made site visits to local or nearby libraries and information service centers to gather information, observe, and talk directly with Native Americans and tribal leaders. The Commission could not have undertaken this project or the resulting report without the advice, assistance and leadership from many groups and individuals, including experts like Dr. Lotsee Patterson, who is on this conference program.

Over the course of this project, NCLIS reviewed the current condition of Tribal libraries, identified improvements needed to adequately address the needs of Native Americans in the future, and drafted preliminary recommendations for actions needed to improve the range and quality of library and information services available to Native Americans who reside and work on Tribal Reservations throughout the United States as well as those who do not live or work on a Reservation.

The study's findings demonstrate that the full range of library and information needs of Native Americans are not being adequately met. In addition, these communities require specialized library and information resources that can address their unique information and educational needs. Also reflected in this report is an urgent national need to record and preserve the heritage, traditions, achievements and wisdom of Native American cultures.

The Commission found that progress has been made in a few specific areas related to American Indian Tribal libraries. New library and archival facilities have been constructed and existing structures have been renovated or reconfigured, with funding from federal grants. Specialized library training for Native Americans has been made available, and assistance has been provided for acquiring library materials and other resources. New and innovative programs involving different approaches and methods are also required, to point the direction for future overall improvement of library and information service programs for Native Americans.

The Commission's report will be in two volumes. The first, the report itself, is a brief document intended for policy makers, legislators, Tribal leaders, state library agencies and other decision-makers at the federal, state and community levels to improve the libraries and information services provided Native Americans in the continental U.S., Alaska and Hawaii. The second volume is appendices containing detailed descriptions of activities performed by NCLIS, including the hearings and reports on site visits, as well as a long-range action plan developed for the Commission, which identifies strategies for providing high quality services. Both volumes are to be printed and distributed shortly.

The report will present ten major challenges for change to all concerned so that library and information services for Native Americans can be dramatically improved. Let me read the ten challenges from the draft report: Develop consistent funding sources required to support improved Native American library and information services,

- Strengthen library and information services training and technical assistance available to Native American communities,
- Develop programs to increase Tribal library material holdings and to develop collections in all formats,
- Improve access and cooperative activities,
- Develop state and local partnerships,
- Establish general federal policy and responsibilities,
- Establish model programs for Native American libraries and information services,
- Develop museum and archival services for preserving Native American cultures,
- Focus attention on adult and family literacy programs,
- Encourage application of newer information network technologies (USNCLIS, 1985).

There is another important section in the summary report. The draft reads as follows:

> All Americans have a role to play in the implementation of the changes called for in this report. Some of the ways each of us can help effect change are:
>
> • Find out what your State, local, or Tribal government is already doing to meet the library and information needs of Native peoples and what it can do to implement this report;
>
> • Identify the 'Challenges' that most closely relate to your organization's goals and objectives, and determine ways you can help them to be realized;
>
> • Foster a spirit of cooperation among State and local agencies to welcome and serve Native Americans;

- Work toward strengthening Federal support for Native American libraries and information services through LSCA Basic Grants and other programs of technical assistance.

Individually, these actions may seem small, but when replicated throughout the Nation the collective impact will be significant. This report, if properly implemented, can build Pathways to Excellence. This, then, is our vision and our eleventh 'Challenge'–a step toward the future (USNCLIS, 1991).

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

The July 1991 White House Conference on Library and Information Services was planned and conducted under the Commission's aegis. Conference delegates approved 95 recommendations, many of which relate to rural and small as well as other types of libraries. Let me read parts of a few of them:

- That establishing new libraries be encouraged, where needed, and support provided for the abolition of barriers to library and information services whether educational, cultural, attitudinal, physical, architectural, legal, fiscal, technological, geographical, environmental, or in language or format." (ACC02-3)
- That the President and the Congress establish a study commission to recommend policies and programs to improve access to library and information services for Native Americans, including American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other underserved U.S. population groups. (ACC05-3)
- That actions be undertaken to ensure equal and timely access to information materials and that special attention directed to the needs of geographically isolated areas including the territories and noncontiguous states, to provide more current information and rapid delivery of library materials, regardless of format." (NIP01-1)
- That networks connecting small, rural, urban and tribal libraries be developed and supported at the federal, state, and local levels to ensure basic library services to all end users. . . The federal government should provide additional funding, based on low-

density populations, under the Library Services and Construction Act to address the networking needs of small and rural libraries. All rural and low-density population libraries should be provided with federal funds for a minimum of one access terminal on the National Research and Education Network." (NET12-1)

- That the Congress enable libraries in our increasingly multicultural and diverse society to target relevant services and programs to the special/unique segments of their community populations, including those with disabilities. Libraries should serve as gateways for actively disseminating information to everyone in the U.S., its states, tribes, and territories, including those in remote areas, through both traditional and nontraditional methods and outlets. Services to reach individuals and families of traditionally underserved populations should be comparable to those services offered to traditional users of service-oriented public libraries. . . (SER07-1)
- That federal priority and economic support be given to establishing libraries as primary information sources for the under-served of the Nation, including these major elements: Congressional adoption of a national policy to extend library services through outreach thus extending the boundaries of traditional library services and reaching people who either cannot avail themselves of library services or are unaware of available services. . . (SER08-1)
- That the Congress adopt a national policy to ensure the preservation of our information resources. The assessment of preservation needs should be clearly articulated, with adequate funding provided for policy implementation. This policy should include: . . .increased federal funding to support existing regional preservation centers and to create new centers in unserved regions of the country. Together, these resources will help to ensure that small libraries, archives, and historical organizations will have access to the information and services they need to preserve their collections. (PRE 01-1) [White House Conference on Library and Information Services, 1991].

This small sample of the 95 White House Conference recommendations shows that, in addition to there being a large number of recommendations, they covered almost every facet of library and information services. The Commission met in October 1991 to begin to deal with this quantity and scope of recommendations and to discuss the Commission's priorities. Guided by the adage of the Commission's vice chairman, Elinor Swaim, "Everything's in order if you move it around," The Commissioners did just that.

They agreed to three general groupings of the recommendations roughly parallel to the Conference's three themes:

- availability and access to information (democracy)
- education services for diverse needs (literacy)
- information networks through technology (productivity).

The Commissioners also realized they needed to hear from other groups what they considered most important from the Conference recommendations and what they planned to do about the recommendations. The Commissioners further agreed it would be good to provide a forum where representatives of national groups could hear each other address these topics. On March 10, 1992, NCLIS sponsored an open forum which had 27 speakers, among whom was Nettie Taylor, for the Public Library Association. Here is part of her testimony:

> Members of the Special Committee on Small and Rural Libraries, as well as the Small and Medium-Sized Libraries Section, are acutely aware of the need of rural residents for equal access to information . . .
>
> At the urging of the Technology in Public Libraries Committee, PLA has joined the Coalition for Networked Information . . . PLA has a particular concern for ensuring that public libraries have access to the information that will be provided through NREN.
>
> We feel that they think, only scholars, academic, special libraries, people with very scholarly needs within another type of institution will need that kind of information, not realizing all the time that many people come to public

> libraries for very advanced . . . information, and will need the access through the new technology to get this information (USNCLIS, 1991).

TWO OTHER CURRENT AND FUTURE PROGRAM EMPHASES OF NCLIS

Under the direction of J. Michael Farrell, named chairman of the Commission in March 1992, NCLIS began concentrating attention on those White House Conference recommendations addressing access to government information in electronic formats and the role of libraries in the National Research and Education Network (NREN). An important factor in shaping NCLIS' activities involves the Commission's statutory mission. Our law states that NCLIS ". . . shall have primary responsibility for . . .advising the President and Congress on the **implementation** of national policy. . . "

Of all the topics addressed by the White House Conference recommendations, perhaps the first area to receive national policy action after the Conference was the High-Performance Computing Act of 1991, which the President signed into law in December 1991. The purpose of P.L. 102-194 is to develop a ". . . program to demonstrate how advanced computers, high-capacity and high-speed networks and electronic data bases can improve the national information infrastructure for use by **all Americans**."

The law calls for the President to establish an advisory committee on high-performance computing consisting of non-federal members, including representatives of the research, education and library communities, network providers, and industry, to provide the director of the Office of Science and Technology with advice. The law further directs federal agencies and departments to work with the private network service providers, state and local agencies, libraries, educational institutions and organizations and others as appropriate, to ensure that researchers, educators and students have access, as appropriate, to the network.

NREN is a networked information initiative for a digital communication superhighway to share research and scholarly information resources among institutions and individuals. NREN is emerging from a loosely organized system of interconnected networks known as the Federal Research Network. The overall goal of NREN is a high-capacity, high-quality computer network infrastructure that supports a broad set of applications and network services for the research and education communities.

NCLIS is not specifically mentioned in the NREN law, but the Commission has a statutory basis for working with the director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, identified in the law as the lead agency for NREN, in developing network management and access policies. NCLIS has authority to ". . .promote research and development activities which will extend and improve the Nation's library and information handling capability as essential links in the national and international communications and cooperative networks." (P.L.100-95)

NCLIS also has statutory authority for developing ". . .overall plans for meeting national library and information needs and for the coordination of activities at the Federal, State, and local levels, taking into consideration all of the library and informational resources of the Nation to meet those needs." (P.L.91-345) I quoted this last part because it is especially important in light of the partnership roles played by federal agencies, regional network nodes, state agencies and local network communication units in implementing the National Research and Education Network.

The words 'network' and 'networking' appear 18 times in the 95 White House Conference recommendations. "Information Networks through Technology" was one of ten topic areas for the Conference and included 16 recommendations. Of those recommendations, the most comprehensive was the one labeled, "Share Via a National 'Superhighway:'"

> That the Congress enact legislation creating and funding the National Research and Education Network (NREN) to serve as an information 'superhighway,' allowing educational institutions, including libraries, to capitalize on the advantages of technology for resource sharing and the creation and exchange of information. The network should be available in all libraries and other information repositories at every level. The governance structure for NREN should include representation from all interested constituencies, including technical, user, and information provider compo-

> nents, as well as government, education at all levels, and libraries (USCLIS, 1992, p. 22).

The High-Performance Computing Act requires that, one year after enactment of this law, the director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy report to the Congress on six policy areas regarding the National Research and Education Network. Those points are enumerated in the law:

1. effective mechanisms for providing operating funds for the maintenance and use of the Network, including user fees, industry support, and continued Federal investment;
2. the future operation and evolution of the Network;
3. how commercial information service providers could be charged for access to the Network, and how Network users could be charged for such commercial information services;
4. the technological feasibility of allowing commercial information service providers to use the Network and other federally funded research networks;
5. how to protect the copyrights of material distributed over the Network; and
6. appropriate policies to ensure the security of resources available on the Network and to protect the privacy of users of networks.

On July 20 and 21, 1992, the Commission sponsored a public forum on libraries' and information services' roles in the National Research and Education Network. The speakers, most of them representatives of national groups or agencies, were asked to address those roles in light of the policy areas outlined in the law as comprising the report back to Congress in December 1992. A total of 26 representatives submitted oral and/or written statements.

The NCLIS director has summarized and organized all the forum statements into a report that has gone to the Office of Science and Technology Policy as an aid in preparing the report to Congress. The Commission is also sending copies of this report to other executive and legislative officials, forum participants, and national library, information and allied associations.

As you might guess, views expressed at the NREN forum and in written statements were as varied as libraries and information organizations themselves. However, it is obvious that there are at least three critical issues that must be addressed if an electronic networked environment is to bring the benefits of which it is capable: that is, the relationships of the public and private sectors, fees for service, and copyright or, as the concept of copyright is more frequently expressed for electronic works, the ownership of intellectual property. The Commission hopes to help address these important concerns.

We also look forward to seeing what will come of the national infrastructure bills introduced in the last Congress, as legislators and others seek to broaden the scope and reach of the National Research and Information Network. We have been in touch with congressional staff about inclusion of libraries generally, in addition to digital libraries, as work resumes on the information infrastructure bills. The Commission's point is that today's libraries can contain, but cannot be replaced by, tomorrow's digital libraries.

Technology alone, of course, will not deliver the solutions to the economic, cultural, social, environmental and human problems of rural America or any other part of America. We are all very aware that education is also being looked at and looked to as both a culprit and a rescuer. Libraries as educational institutions certainly received prominent attention at the White House Conference, as evidenced by the priority recommendation, the Omnibus Children and Youth Literacy Initiative.

After the Commission's October 1991 meeting the following synthesis was developed of the White House Conference recommendations under the general heading of "Education Services for Diverse Needs:"

> That the President and Congress invigorate student learning and literacy thru legislation to support and fund 1) school library services (through categorical aid administered through a dedicated office and program at the Department of Education; 2) public library children's and young adult services (including partnerships with relevant organizations and a library-based, salaried Kids Corps project); and 3) research; public and school library partnerships; participation in the nationwide network; and education for service to

> children and young adults. That appropriate demonstration grants and technology also be funded.
>
> That literacy for all remain a national priority, with emphasis on training for culturally disadvantaged rural and urban minorities and access to training for the disabled. That the Congress support and fund library literacy programs; development of a national library-based literacy training model, new technologies and equipment, and quality literacy materials; and administer LSCA titles VI and VIII as non-discretionary programs through the states.

One of the things the Commission has done, not only to help implement important White House Conference recommendations, but also further its interagency work in the critical area of education, is to join the AMERICA 2000 Library Partnership, announced in September. Other federal partners are the Department of Education, the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Institute for Literacy.

The *AMERICA 2000 Library Partnership* brochure, of which I brought copies for conference participants, highlights the 1989 education summit of the President and the 50 governors that culminated in the bipartisan announcement of six National Education Goals:

1. All American children will start school ready to learn;
2. At least 90 percent of our students will graduate from high school;
3. Our students will demonstrate competence in the core subjects;
4. American students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement;
5. Every adult will be literate and have the skills necessary to compete in a world economy;
6. Every school will be safe and drug-free.

The brochure outlines components to be included in the Library Partnership:

- Today's Libraries and the Goals
- Libraries for the 21st Century, and
- Involving America 2000 Communities.

At its meeting last week the Commission approved of three of the NCLIS committee chairs working together to plan how NCLIS will pursue the White House Conference recommendation, the discussions revolving around reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the 1994 or 1995 reauthorization of the Library Services and Construction Act, and other interagency and interlibrary work to strengthen libraries as educational institutions. The Commission will hear that group's proposed plan in January.

AMERICA 2000, of course, is the label that President Bush and his administration have used for initiatives related to improving education. An article in this week's *Chronicle of Higher Education* said that many "...believe that Mr. Clinton may adopt certain America 2000 concepts, such as the creation of national standards and means of assessing progress toward those standards. They also believe Mr. Clinton will continue to focus on the education goals that he helped formulate. . ." (Zook, 1991)

CONCLUSION

Let me close by acknowledging that the latter part of my talk deals with all libraries, not just rural and small public libraries. However, perhaps we can also employ, in a nonpartisan way, a phrase from the recent campaign, to the effect that a rising tide lifts all boats. In our ever smaller and increasingly interrelated world, the strategies for improvement should be as inclusive as possible, and targeted strategies should not unintentionally impair any other part of our universe. The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science hopes to be your worthy partner in helping to improve library and information services for all your constituents. Thank you.

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HOW FAR DOES OUTREACH REACH?

by

John Philip

You have heard this morning about the future including the concern that our citizens do not for the most part keep up with contemporary issues.At least the books which cover these issues in depth are not being requested heavily.

You have heard about one way Public Libraries can impact economic development. The potential for elitism coming out of electronic publishing was noted.

These discussions provide me with additional data. This I may be allowed to say is where my comments come in; this is "the rest of the story."

How far does Outreach reach?

Into the heart of Americans
Into the soul of America
Into the very fiber of democracy
Into the weary hands of the aged
Into the eager hands of children
Into the puzzled hearts of immigrants
Into the searching hands of the unemployed

How far does Outreach reach?

From the Native Americans in New York and Washington States to the Hispanic Americans in New Mexico
To Pre-school children in Baltimore or Hennepin County
To prisoners in Anderson, Indiana
To inner city children of Detroit and Los Angeles

Though I feel compelled to add a caveat to this litany – "at least while extra funds are available."

A PARADIGM REVISITED

What is a library that we distinguish between "normal service" and "outreach?"

What is the model on which we build library service?

and...

Is it time to rethink?

Its functioning,

Its methodologies,

Its assumptions, and

Its practices?

A functional model on which we have been building the last thirty years might be described as in the phraseology of *Field of Dreams*, "If you build it, they will come."

This seems to have worked — for a long time — for a lot of people in generations past or so it seemed.

People were predictable.

Neighborhoods were predictable.

Schools were predictable.

In general, Americans were a predictable breed. But professional and social critics have written that:

Things have changed.

People and society changed.

Expectations have changed.

Roles of public institutions MUST change.

Somehow, rather subtly, the priority of getting ideas, information, and yes, the "library habit," into the hands and hearts of citizens and their children has been superseded.

Building libraries, writing procedures, designing management theories, formalizing professional requirements for librarians — but not necessarily for libraries — these have demanded the energies of many of the profession's best and brightest.

In addition, the rise of a multitude of professional organizations, the fight to get and keep federal money, has come to define the body we call librarianship — at least to too large an extent.

All these activities are necessary to some extent to be sure.

Except for some notable exceptions, bucking this new paradigm of the library and the librarian has some to be seen as, at least, suspect or naive.

But what was an acceptable professionalism is changing; something has happened.

In preparation for a seminar at Clarion University earlier this fall, I studied about 50 future looking library literature documents. It was startling, even though by now I am used to being in the minority of my profession as a bookmobile advocate. What I read was sobering.

After about six months of this digging, one impression became clear. The library environment is different.

If bookmobile and other kinds of outreach had often been hard to sell even in the 60s, and certainly during and since the 70s fuel crisis, it was because the country was so normal and predictable. We had a sort of rosy glow. Even the civil rights movement accepted more or less token extensions of library service. Even some of these have since been denigrated by some — despite some very real breakthroughs in service delivery.

Meanwhile...

A paradigm was being smashed. We were becoming a different country.

What were some of these changes according to these future oriented writers?

1. Library use is qualitatively inconsistent.

   Despite some impressive numbers in circulation and registration, use of libraries for information purposes is minimal according to Bernard Vavrek (1990).

   In a study assessing the information needs of rural Americans, 37% of those queried stated they used the library for best sellers; 48% were inactive library users.

   The clear conclusions: "The public library is not an information source for most Americans." At another time Vavrek (1990) warns of a decline of the public library — more true perhaps recently than when written — he summarizes the changed in the family and the dynamics of the information explosion.

2. Completion is surfacing.

   Bernard Vavrek (1992) and others point out the reality that the public library is no longer the "only kid on the block."

   In an article not in any way aimed at the library market, "Pay for Call" the use of 900 number use for current information is reported as booming. Peggy Campbell (1991), a freelance writer and a former marketing administrator with experience at the State Library of Ohio points out what are, to me, astounding statistics. For example, that the *Atlanta Constitution Journal* newspaper in November, 1990 received 704,000 pay (900 number) phone calls. In 1992 the paper each month received 50,000 to 70,000 calls. The subjects for which callers may have paid $3.00 each covered subjects such as sports — including current scores of games in progress, weather, stocks, traffic, entertainment and classifieds. An additional 1,300,000 free general calls are logged. People clearly will pay for information they want, when they want it.

3. The quality and speed of public library information is spotty — according to Mathew Lesko (1992), information is not timely or it is wrong most of the time.

4. The "virtual library" may be in the process of making much of what is traditionally defined as library service to be obsolete and too slow especially for those who are sophisticated and serious about information.

5. The potential is imminent for full text data bases such as the capacity to load 200 books on a CD the size of a credit card, according to Michael Malinconico (1992) and Laverna Saunders (1992). Potential for electronic information is almost unlimited — with or without the librarian.

6. But on the other hand . . . There are numerous problems in delivery and use.

   By the 21st century, per Bob Cronenberger (1989), children's education will be sorely lacking, social services and higher education will be beyond the reach of the majority and there will be a conservative mood in the country. 60% Of women will work outside the home.

7. Richard Panz (1989), in the same publication, ticks off a series of similar problems in the delivery of services. These included, among others, the income gap resulting in the need for two income families to keep up. Less family time to get to the library. The escalation of the "latch key children" issue again reducing access to a library. The now common single parent family. Add to this illiteracy, unemployment and homelessness. This litany is from a pragmatic manager not a social service worker, I might add.

8. Thomas Ballard (1988) in the *Future of the Public Library* seminar, argues for larger collections in many more facilities closer to home for more people and also bemoans the lack of public demand for information for daily living.

9. Jonathon Kozol is, I suppose, a living symbol of the concern for illiteracy. His writings are too numerous to list. His comments in Publisher's Weekly that literacy in the USA has retreated 100 years will suffice for this paper. (1991).

10. Social needs in this country defy solution and the public good is not being met by government — with libraries not an exception.

A number of writers comment on this.

A. John Berry (1989) states that the broadest possible readership is necessary for the "public good." Only 30% to 50% are currently being served according to Berry. He takes a strong stand against user fees in this context.

B. The existence/need for the ALA "poor peoples policy" (ALA) reinforces this position as do comments from Marcia Nauratil (1985) who suggests that we public librarians just may not any longer believe that the public library is essential for democracy or people's growth.

Demographic realities — we are in a essentially changed society. A brief summary (Bell, 1987):

Minorities are becoming majorities.

The population is aging.

Families are no more as we knew them.

An underclass exists in our midst, much of the Great American Dream is no more for the majority.

State and federal governments finances are drying up.

Meanwhile, the traditional paradigm of public libraries — as in much of public policy I would suggest — hangs on. Most libraries appear not to be changing as dramatically as the environment in which they exist, if at all.

What are some of the recommendations proposed by the library leaders quoted or cited above.?

1. Enlarge the circle of information users. The high risk group is outside the circle while the educated are not, says Kathryn Stephanoff speaking at the *Future of the Public Library* conference at OCLC in 1988.

2. Reach out to help resolve the country's education problem (Sager, 1992) and reach out to minorities (Cronenberger, 1989).
3. Recognize and respond to the new family realities (Vavrek, 1992).
4. Provide smaller but better stocked libraries (Ballard, 1988).
5. Stock materials that people want — not what we want them to want (Robinson, 1992).
6. Reach out to all the nontraditional populations (Nauratil, 1985).
7. Train our staff better to respond to information needs. (Vavrek, 1991).
8. Eliminate barriers to access (Panz, 1989)
9. Take illiteracy seriously. (Kozol, 1991 and Szudy, 1990)

HOW FAR DOES OUTREACH REACH?

Outreach can touch every one of these issues — effectively; both the people represented by the concerns listed and the realities referred to.

I will define outreach to include:

- branches and branchmobiles
- bookmobile service, for which we now have guidelines available. These came out of the national bookmobile in 1988 and were revised in 1992. (State Library of Ohio, 1992).
- mail book services with several variations
- homebound service — also done with several variations
- child care agencies
- deposit collections
- institutional services including nursing, retirement homes, prisons, etc.

Schools still receive bookmobile service widely, though frequently not without controversy.

I will not comment on these methods individually. Much has been written on them.

These noted methods respond also to Nancy Cummings' and Nancy Welsh's comments earlier about no frills, personal service and getting into the community.

Outreach responds to needs in two ways:

A. By providing actual information.

B. By exposing the public to information — broadly defined.

A couple of reports from field trips I have made this year may illustrate this.

At a bookmobile stop in Southwestern Ohio, 10-15 miles from the nearest library, a mother with her ten children receives library service because the bookmobile was there. The sight of this mother and her kids grabbing books by the arms full could be adequately described only on live film.

At this same stop or, one nearby, a post-middleage woman, when asked what she did for reading before the bookmobile started up after a hiatus of several years, said she did not read books in the interim.

Another stop saw a middle aged man returning a group of art books some of which had been borrowed via OCLC from across the country. He was able to continue his chosen life in the country without sacrificing his passion for art.

At a trailer park 15 to 18 children jammed into the bookmobile only about 5 miles from a beautiful, new library — only 5 miles away. "Why use the bookmobile?," I asked. The answer? None of them are taken to the library by their parents. One child that day told us his mother would not let him join even the bookmobile library — setting in her immediate neighborhood!

During a morning of homebound services visits in Delaware County, Ohio, I had the following experiences:

An 80 year old widow and her slightly retarded daughter receive a bag of books each month. She is trying to stay on the family homestead about 4 miles from the main library.

Another active octogenarian, 83 actually, a widow also trying to stay in her family home is just a bit less lonely and a able to keep up with the historical material she enjoys reading.

A third woman, 86; her retired minister husband is in a mental institution; has raised 20 or more foster children and now shares her home with a retarded woman. She is still lively and active in church, but getting to the library is a significant strain on her.

We stopped in a mobile home park to drop off books to a woman, probably in her 70's (she did not offer her age as the others had), suffering from a lung disorder requiring her to carry an oxygen tube around the house. She is reasonably able, but can't face the dust she encounters on the way to the library. Even at the library she tires too easily to wind her way around the stacks. Though only a couple of miles or less from the main library, its usability, for her, is questionable at best.

These are just a few (perhaps more poignant) stories, but they can be multiplied. The staff in Riverside, Oceanside and Los Angeles, California libraries certainly have many as they deal with the Oriental and Hispanic communities there. The City of Washington with its inner city elderly and Arlington, Virginia's focus on targeting teens would elicit similar examples .

The people receiving books delivered by mail (with many variations from Maine's statewide service using the full resources of the state library collection to more typical paperback special collection and variations in between, 178,000 are circulated in one system in Southeastern Ohio) elicit many stories. Maybe we can share some of yours today.

Kiosk branches in rural West Virginia provide instant facilities at modest cost where a full service branch would be an unreachable expense.

Service to day care centers may well prove as helpful to library literacy as the head start has done for school preparedness and health improvement. In North Carolina a nurse accompanies the bookmobile and provides screenings and health information.

This is an outreach era.

McDonald's, banks and other retail outlets do not locate in the city center and wait — neither can tomorrow's library assume everyone who needs information service will seek out the central or even a branch library.

Some outreach, if not most of it, is a form of enticement. No argument.

I make no apology for enticement efforts, however... Are some outreach efforts not defensible? Of course.

Programs designed or delivered poorly have no more right to exist than any in house program.

Programs clearly rejected by the public for whom intended, once fairly tried, should not be continued. Absolutely! No argument.

Programs, which after careful evaluation are found to be not cost effective should be discontinued — absolutely!

I would argue, however, that the "playing field be even." I would urge that impact analysis be done with total objectivity; that the users of the outreach program be seen every bit as valid as any "in house" program users; that the cost of such outreach service be accurately compared, cost-to-benefit, to more traditional "in house" programs .

My bias would lead me to see an added value in a program or service which brings into the library or reaches a resident typically identified as a "non user." I would pay a premium for such a recruit to library service.

This premium can be justified perhaps most easily as an investment in the future, if one did not want to be seen too much a social liberal — a categorization for which by the way I never apologize.

Are outreach programs designed out of compassion? — Yes but primarily they should also reflect a valid self interest.

I make no apology for efforts to reach out to those who are in any way barriered. The shake-up in our society is great and the needs acute.

From what I see and read if libraries wish to compete they must both keep up with electronic enhancements, which I think most of us accept even with eagerness, and must reach out to those who stand in real jeopardy of missing the boat in personal growth and in contributing to our society.

I would urge that we not endorse "trickle down librarianship."

I have suggested how far outreach reaches. I hope I have done some justice to the topic.

I have not focussed on the budget issue, though already there are signs that outreach will suffer with cuts. If that must be in your community, so be it.

I have no illusions about the challenge to respond to the demands on today's library. I am not totally naive .

Automation of the library must happen.

If economic projections of some are correct, libraries will certainly share the hard times.

I have tried to report to you a face of our society which translates into a challenge to keep the public library relevant to more of our population. Marcia Nauratil asks, "Do we believe the public library is critical to individuals and our democratic society?" (Nauratil, 1985)

The 1982 Public Library Association document, *The Public Library: Democracy's Resource: A Statement of Principles* states it well.

> Free access to ideas and information, a prerequisite to the existence of a responsible citizenship,is as fundamental to america as are the principles of freedom,equality and individual rights.This access is also fundamental to our social, political and cultural systems....

And further;

> Access to information and the recorded wisdom and experience of others has long been held a requirement for achieving personal equality and for improving the quality of

> life and thought in the daily activities and relationships of individuals. (Public Library Association, 1982)

These quotes sound akin to keynote speaker Michael Marien's comments on the importance of a literate electorate.

I challenge all of us to restate our belief in this concept. Outreach, I propose can play a major role .

Make this a reality.

"If you build it they will come." Better yet, perhaps, "reach out and touch someone."

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John Philip is the director of Field Operations, State Library of Ohio. The above speech was given at the third conference in the series, The 21st Century: The Future of Rural and Small Public Libraries. *The conference was held in Phoenix, Arizona November 19-21, 1992, jointly sponsored by the Arizona Department of Librtary, Archives and Public Records and Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship, in cooperation with the Graduate Library Schoo, University of Arizona and the Department of Library Science, Clarion University of Pennsylvania.*

AND WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

by

Robert N. Case

There is an old and familiar saying in Vaudeville - "The Show's not over 'til the Fat Lady sings." Would you welcome, please, the Fat Lady!

The title of the Fat Lady's final number has been changed four times in the course of planning this conference.

First it was: "Humanizing Networking"

2nd it was: "The Need for Cooperation is not only a Concern in the Country"

3rd it was: "Where Do We Go From Here" and

finally 4th: "And Now What Do We Do?"

My first reaction was to chuck the whole program and sing in my highest falsetto, "I'm only a bird in a gilded cage." And in as much as I'm only 4 weeks from retirement of 40 years of public service in education and school and public library service at all government levels, it seemed fitting that I am waiting to have the cage door open and to fly freely away. I would have no more responsibility for the concerns, issues and the commitment of librarians to their dedication and roles to make an impact upon the people and the communities they serve.

Let me assure you that even as I reach the end of the trail, this conference has totally *energized me completely!* It is this future of library service and the spirit of this conference that I shall miss in the years to come.

The goals or objectives of this assembly were to:

1) determine the nature of the community library now and in the decades to come, and

2) develop an agenda to provide the future framework for rural and small public libraries in the future.

The first verse of the Fat Lady's song is to congratulate the planning staff of Arizona State Library and the Center for Rural Librarianship at Clarion State University for meeting these goals. Beyond that, the program content, group discussions and the break times, provided many opportunities to discover and share ideas on rural and small public library services.

The conference did not solve any one problem or issue, but it did, through its presentations and especially group discussion, help to increase an awareness of the diversity of rural and small public libraries and the local concerns each addresses.

Two key elements that came across in the conference were the sense of commitment and the feeling of isolation in the work world of our daily tasks. I doubt that the commitment or feeling of isolation will ever end. But the conference planned in Gettysburg in 1993, Bismarck in 1994 and Greenbay, Wisconsin in 1995 will continue to reinforce our commitment to library service and to lessen the sense of isolation.

Dr. Michael Marien, the futurist, set the tone for a conference on the future of rural and small public libraries. His observation on the future — infloglut, access to information in a democratic society and the major world agenda concerning the environment — took us away from our daily routines, problems and concerns. His remarks were intellectually stimulating and challenging to all of us. They were also frustrating, too, because to many the world and the global agendas he identified were far beyond what we felt we could handle with shortages of staff, use of volunteers, limited budgets, and our small collections.

I thank Dr. Marien for poking us out of a slumber. For me, at least, it brought on a whole new perspective of library service and an opportunity to develop coalitions in my local community. As public dollars get tighter to support public library service, it becomes increasingly difficult for me to justify great public expenditure for best sellers, mysteries, sci-fi and the bodice gripping romances. I know that's what makes us popular, but perhaps new library programs that give support to local, national and world agendas will bring more sense of purpose and justification to funding bodies in achieving some common goals. I don't believe Michael Marien nor I are suggesting no more popular books or best sellers. But he does offer ideas for us to capture an opportunity to help bring global, life and environmental problems to our local communities. In each of our library service areas there are already others organized to address these concerns. I'm suggesting we start communicating with them, see what their goals are, how they fit in with national and world agendas. Build a coalition, ask for their support for resources, take a first step, a small step, and build upon that stairway to increase our response and service role in a global society. For a library not to be a part of this leadership suggests that the library is isolated to the concerns of its community and does not see a broader field of global climate, ozone holes, deforestation, decreased wet lands, noise/air/water/toxic waste pollution, population growth, food supply distribution and habitats for humanity. Understanding all this and providing library resources is clearly a part of our mission.

Let's look at our role and mission of the library in a more focused way. I believe it will prove to be a right step. In the follow-up panel to Dr. Marien's keynote address, Jane Williams, from the National Commission on Libraries and Information Services, gave us a quotation that was relevant to today's information problem: "You didn't cause it, you can't control it, and you're not the cure." That's right on target, but she also stated we "cannot be relieved of the responsibility" to help change it.

I don't know how many of you have gone through the Role Assessment of Public Libraries. It is an interesting exercise. All the libraries in my system completed the exercise. There were no surprises. The main library chose as its roles to be a Public Access Reference Center, Children's Doorway to Learning, and Popular Materials Library. That's what we do best. These outcomes were the result of staff/board assessments. But *we failed to involve the community*. So as we fulfill these roles, plan our budgets around these identified roles and services, we lost sight that 30,000 students saw us as the Formal Education Support System, or others saw us as the center for community activities and as a public forum. Clearly my library will have to broaden the base of this exercise. I can only hope that those who participate will see the world or global agendas as a part of our mission.

In the follow-up panel to Dr. Marien's keynote address, Jane Williams mentioned an article she had done on "Minimal Management." If I were to be asked to do an article similar to this, and I believe I could, I would call it "Management Interruptis."

I'm sure your daily agenda is shattered almost hourly on issues and concerns both internally and externally that direct you away from key planning agendas. I'll give you a perfect example of this interruptis.

In my library system we have a library in the town of Intercourse. They wanted to organize a Friends group. They called me — they needed a press release. So in response to the interruption, I wrote a hasty press release. My secretary typed it and sent it to three local papers, plus weekly county newspapers. I did not proofread it.

The press release said:

> The Friends of Intercourse are calling an organization meeting on Thursday, October 15 at the Intercourse Library at 7:00. Anyone interested in furthering the cause of Intercourse is invited to attend. The purpose of the meeting is to select a steering committee, elect officers and plan the programs related to Intercourse for the coming year!

When I got there, I didn't see one Amish buggy. But I soon found out the press release had been picked up by Associated Press and was carried in local media throughout the Atlantic Seaboard. We had people attending from six states! That's how management interruptis gets us into trouble.

I believe this conference has made it very clear that we are constantly in response to new agendas. How we react and cope and keep an even keel, and gather among us the key leaders and advisors to help us plan, is essentially a major concern to all of us.

I greatly appreciated Helen Maule's description of her service area in Nogales, Arizona. This has to be a classic example of a library service area that includes apathy, many government layers and levels of barriers, an ethnic mix of population always in transition beyond what any library can expect to cope with. Beyond that, her library is impacted upon by international treaties beyond which her library board, city or county has little control.

And I venture to add that each one attending this conference has similar barriers and constraints to cope with at a different or lesser level. But nevertheless these concerns are very real to your ability to produce, plan and be accountable to your funding bodies and constituents. A self assessment of your library and the community it serves should be done annually, included in this the identification of barriers as well as identifying those who can help you move forward.

John Christensen was refreshing in his history and review of rural libraries. "Voices from the Cracker Barrel" in the old general store brought nostalgia to our minds. He also sensitized us to the demographics of a rural town or place. And yet as his cracker barrel library moved into the present times we saw how it played a role on local economic development. His introduction was excellent background to Nancy Walsh, Senior Research Analyst for the Morrison Institute for Public Policy and Economic Development programs. She clarified the term, Economic Development, and addressed the needs to be met for economic development programs. Results of surveys placed the library low as a contributing source of information. But through statewide efforts in Arizona, this changed the role 23 libraries are now playing in local/regional support for economic development efforts. We look forward to seeing copies of her core collection of library resources to support efforts in our local communities. We have been challenged from reports of library efforts in support of economic development in other states.

The term "partnership" was expressed by almost all presenters. A good relationship to pursue and nurture. It may, however, relate also to developing coalitions — which is different, but equally important. I wish more examples of coalition building at the local level had been stressed, it would help to lessen our sense of isolation.

The first day of the conference stressed programs and activities at the local and state level. It opened our eyes and minds to the level of action programs ongoing throughout our country. The second day of the conference gave focus to the national agenda and included reports of two major programs related to the Rural Information Center and the progress that has been made in establishing public libraries for tribal nations in Indian territories.

Jane Williams, Research Associate for the National Commission on Libraries and Information Services, spoke on the national agenda for developing plans and policies, studies, surveys and research to advise the national administration on avenues it must travel and support for a strong national information access program. She reported on a number of recommendations and information agendas identified at the 1991 White House Conference on Libraries and Information Services. Among these were the National Rural Information Services in 1980, the National Advisory Board for Rural Library Needs in 1984, and its final report in 1985. Two current programs: 1) the Public Library Cooperative Statistics Project is now capable of providing current library statistics to provide analysts with current data to analyze the geographic and demographic trends in public library services. 2) Further study of this data by the Library Research Seminar will call for other data needed to give important management data to national library planners and program development.

Perhaps one of the most exciting presentations of the conference was that from Patricia John, Coordinator of the Rural Information Center from the National Agricultural Library in Beltsville, Maryland. With the touch tone press of an 800 number, libraries and citizens have access to hundreds of data bases to answer questions of a total universe of knowledge related to rural life, health, economic development, agriculture, marketing, sociological and psychological issues. The Rural Information Center provides responses to customized inquiries. Originally established as a clearinghouse by the US Department of Agriculture, it has now been expanded to a full fledged information center. Each year its data is expanded to now include all areas of life. Among one of its more important publications is *Federal Funding Sources for Rural Areas*. This has to be a gold mine for libraries and a wonderful source to open doors to build coalitions in local areas for community development to enhance the quality of life. The Rural Information Center has access to nine major national data banks. Librarians who express a feeling of isolation should be quick to realize how quickly this will open the door to a new and active role in support of community planning.

This conference told us many things. Among the most important was that though we are working often in isolation, events, activities and plans are going on at all levels on our behalf — state libraries, the National Commission, the Rural Information Center and most certainly in the publishing and information access initiatives across the nation. Deborah Loeding, Director of Library Relations for H.W. Wilson, presented an important overview to the corporate publishing world. Its decisions and plans often guided by focus groups are leading to the development of new information sources, both for the library and home consumer. This publishing and information industry has turned full circle, developing and marketing new products, merging and joining ranks with other vendors to package information in affordable formats. These new initiatives will have great impact upon national and worldwide consumers and libraries as well.

Just when we think technology is wagging the library's tail we hear a report from Lotsee Patterson on the information needs and library services of Native Americans. Her report on the development of public libraries on tribal lands of Indian nations was a report that was most welcomed in our pluralist society. We are encouraged by their advocacy role and the progress and impact and advisory role the Native Americans are having at the national levels to house their information, archives and public document needs met through access to their public library.

But there were other concerns addressed at the conference. One highlight was the value of library extension services. John Phillip, Director of Field Operations, State Library of Ohio, spoke of the alternative outreach programs provided by public libraries across the nation, through branch libraries, bookmobiles, Book By Mail, Homebound delivery, deposit collections, institutions, childcare units and services to prisons and jails. He concluded his presentation by saying, "We can build new buildings and they may come to us, on the other hand through library extension services we can initiate new opportunities to 'reach out and touch someone.'"

Preparing a national cadre of library professionals, technicians and paraprofessionals was addressed in the report by Rita Flannigan, Dean, College of Communication, Computer Information Services and Library Services, at Clarion University, Clarion, Pennsylvania. It is encouraging to learn that academic institutions are developing a variety of programs and moving off companies to the grasslands to meet library personnel training needs. Offsite learning centers and long distance learning programs are beginning to answer the education needs of library personnel in remote places. Success of these early ventures suggests increased expansion of new levels of training components. Especially important was the effort of library educators to better understand what skills are basic and desirable for libraries in rural and small public libraries.

And now, "What Do We Do?" We have several choices. I recognize that all of us have been away from our work place for perhaps four days. On Monday morning when we return to our desk I know there will be a work backup of papers to shuffle. I urge you not to put your conference folder of notes aside, the desk work can wait until another day.

Most of us will have a 2-3 hour plane ride on our return home. Take this time to review the conference and write down your highlights, bits of new information, information that will be useful to share with your staff, board, supervisors or with key community leaders. If nothing else, tell them you are not as isolated as you once thought, report on the State Library activities, the National Commission on Libraries and Information Services, the Rural Information Center, publishing initiatives. Suggest a plan to your local funding sources on how you can help them through the Rural Information Center. Give it a try. See results, See the funding bodies response. Try another inquiry. Reach out to other agencies. Find out their questions. Dial the Center's 800 number.

A positive report of the conference will give you a work and planning agenda with policy makers. Share this with them. See how you can help fulfill their needs. Reach out and build coalitions. Plan a few projects together to meet common needs. Be a part of the community policy process. See the results. Plan another one.

Don't assume these policy makers know your goals or agendas. Never assume your board or commissioners, supervisors or community know library needs. You are probably the only library administrative professional in your community. It is your responsibility and appropriate in your role as chief librarian to share what you have learned these past several days for the public good. You'll be amazed how our goals are similar.

And why do we do these things? I shall share with you a philosophy that I have shared with many for over 35 years. This is in recognition of an individual whose name is Elizabeth Knapp.

There probably isn't anyone in this room who has ever heard of Elizabeth Knapp. Who was she? In 1918 she was the Supervisor for Children's Services for the Detroit Public Library. I first met Elizabeth Knapp as a young student over a quarter of a century ago while doing a research project at Case Western Reserve University Library School. At that time I came across her annual report written in 1918. At the conclusion of her report she makes a statement that was very important to me. Then, as now, I was terribly idealistic about entering into a profession that I hoped would give me great fulfillment, and it has, far beyond my expectations. I copied Elizabeth Knapp's philosophy on a piece of paper and put it in my wallet.

Later, when I became a school librarian, I found how important this philosophy would be to me. I began to use it in conferences and workshops. As my library career changed, I was able to use it across the state of Ohio with thousands of teachers and hundreds of librarians and administrators and board members. When I left Ohio and had the privilege of working with the American Library Association for six years, I carried Elizabeth Knapp's statement with me and used it across the nation at many state and national conferences of library associations and to nearly 30 library schools. Just when it seemed as though I had used up my audience, I was invited on a special assignment to Australia. I shared her philosophy in the jungles of New Guinea, down the coast of Australia at many conferences. I carried it to Port Arthur, Tasmania, and up through the vast great outback to aborigine settlements — even there, there were those responsible for library services — finally across the continents and back to Chicago. I often wonder what Elizabeth Knapp would say to think that something that was a second thought for her would be carried so far to so many people.

It occurred to me when I was awarded the Pennsylvania Distinguished Service Award, I had never shared this philosophy with my colleagues who were responsible for rural and smaller public library services in Pennsylvania. Most recently at a retirement dinner held in my honor I realized I had never shared Elizabeth Knapp's thoughts with my staff or board.

What was life like for Elizabeth Knapp at the Detroit Public Library in 1918? In many respects not so much different than in our libraries today. Then, of course, the nation was at war. But then, like today, the world was still seeking new avenues of peace and world understanding. Toward libraries there was, as now, an attitude of apathy and indifference. Elizabeth Knapp began her report with a review of what she had hoped to accomplish during the coming year. As her report progresses it is soon plain to see that forces were chipping away at her goals - bit by bit, piece by piece. Her small budget for books, she soon lost. The small staff she had counted on to help her implement her programs she lost to mobilization efforts. The facilities of the library then were not the fine example we know of in Detroit today. They could not begin to enfold and encompass the creative programs Elizabeth Knapp had planned for her young people. It was an inner city library then as it is today. As the year comes to a close, the decline in circulation statistics offered additional proof of the frustrations expressed during the year.

Most of us would have ended the report in defeat. But not Elizabeth Knapp. I can only imagine that at this point she put down her pen and thought for a moment about who she was, where she was going, how she was going to get there and what effect it would all have upon those she served. And then, again, I can only imagine, she picked up her pen and this is what she wrote:

> But there really are no figures for the following:
> An American idea instilled,
> A sluggish brain quickened,

An imagination stirred,
An artistic sense developed,
Or civic pride taught, or
Lessons made more vivid and hours of real enjoyment given free.
There is only one faith that we may have done some of these things for many people.

This is my last official and public presentation before my retirement. I'm pleased that the last verse of the "show's" closing can be the verse of Elizabeth Knapp. Take her philosophy and pass it on. Practice it. Add to it your own special touches. It is the most difficult of all ideas to articulate as a measure to funding agencies and law makers at all levels. But it speaks well of why we do the things we do in our thousands of rural and small public libraries. It also speaks of how our users respond to what we do.

There is a faith, a purpose and the wonderful hope that in the end we have done these things for many people.

Robert N. Case was the director of the Lancaster County Library in Pennsylvania until his retirement shortly after this speech was given. The above conference summary is from the third conference in the series, The 21st Century: The Future of Rural and Small Public Libraries. *The conference was held in Phoenix, Arizona November 19-21, 1992, jointly sponsored by the Arizona Department of Libriary, Archives and Public Records and Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship, in cooperation with the Graduate Library Schoo, University of Arizona and the Department of Library Science, Clarion University of Pennsylvania. It is with regret that we note Mr. Case has since passed away.*

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The first four articles in this edition of rural libraries contains texts of speeches presented at the September, 1991 conference ***Information and Rural Economic Development: Issues and Strategies****, held in Portland, Maine. This conference was jointly sponsored by the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship, the National Agricultural Library, and the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development in cooperation with the Department of Library Science, Clarion University of Pennsylvania and the State Library of Maine.*

The final speech was presented at the November, 1991 conference ***The Future of Rural and Small Public Libraries*** *held in Birmingham, Alabama. The conference was jointly sponsored by the Alabama Public Library Service and the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship, Clarion University of Pennsylvania.*

ROLE OF INFORMATION IN RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

A LEGISLATIVE PERSPECTIVE

by

Jonathan Johnson

INTRODUCTION

The Center for Rural Pennsylvania is a legislative agency of the Pennsylvania General Assembly. Created in 1987, as part of the Rural Pennsylvania Revitalization Act, the Center serves as a focal point for rural policy development. The Center has three responsibilities: develop rural policy initiatives; provide information on rural issues; and support rural policy research. In addition, the Center maintains an extensive database on Pennsylvania's rural economic, demographic, and social conditions.

Supporting rural policy research is the biggest component of the Center's activities. Through a competitive grants program, the Center funds policy-oriented research. That is, research that produces information the General Assembly can use to help it make policy decisions. In past years, grant research has become the basis for legislative initiatives. Currently, the Center is funding nine university grants in such areas as: assessing the impact of residential development on rural communities, developing a rural cost-of-living index, and ways to improve economic development staff.

As a policy analyst, my job is to provide the General Assembly with information on rural issues. Information and communications are the tools of my trade. They are also the tools used in rural economic development.

This afternoon, I am going to examine information used by legislators in formulating rural economic and community development policies. To do so, I will first look at the sources of information used in formulating policies. Next, I will examine the uses and abuses of information in modeling policies. And finally, I will explore ways to make information more useful. The purpose of this behind-the-scenes look is to show that information plays a role in formulating government developmental policies.

Before we begin, however, I would like to expand the scope of this paper by combining economic development with community development. Traditionally, economic development was the domain of industry and business, while community development was something governments did. However, as the 1980s have painfully shown, there is no clear dichotomy between business and government. Both are mutually dependent. And both work best as partners. In Pennsylvania, the Ben Franklin Partnership Program has become a national model of government successfully promoting advanced technologies to make traditional industries more competitive and to help develop new technology businesses. Consequently, economic and community development are mutually important for rural communities, which for too long have lacked both.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

One day when in the library I ran across a master's essay entitled, "The Impact of Photocopiers on the State General Assembly." Written in the late 1960s before photocopiers were common, the essay predicted that photocopiers would reduce partisan animosity and produce better legislation by enabling information to be quickly disseminated.

Photocopiers, computers, faxes, and other technological hardware have certainly increased the speed and availability of information. Today, a rural legislator can sit in his or her district office and receive detailed analysis on any bill or policy decision without having to travel to the capitol. Despite our high-tech ability to communicate, instant information has done little to reduce partisan rivalry or produce good policy decisions. Therefore, when looking at the role of information in policy-making, it is best to look at the message, not the messenger.

Legislators can receive information on economic and community development from one of five sources: legislative, executive, local governments, academic, and nongovernment. Yet, as we will see, there is a great deal of overlap between each of these groups.

Legislative

As we all know, most states have three separate, but equal, branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial. Each produces its own information. However, the abilities of the executive branch to collect and analyze information often overshadows the other two branches. So, as not to be in the dark, many state assemblies have set up their own informational units. Structurally, these units are to be independent sources of information used to evaluate the governor's proposals. The Library of Congress was, in part, created to fulfill this function at the national level.

Generally, legislative informational units fall into one of three groups: committees and joint committees, research and informational offices, and legislative agencies. In many capitols, committees and joint committees are among the most influential sources of information. Usually staffed by experts in their field, their job is to formulate, investigate, and when necessary, amend legislation. The information supplied by these agencies is the synthesis of public hearings and summaries of executive and academic research. Because of time pressure, committee staffers rarely have the opportunity to collect primary data.

The number of committees can range from over 85 in Missouri and New York to 14 in Nebraska with its one House. The average is 34 per state, with 15 in the Senate and 19 in the House. Thirteen state assemblies have a committee to examine urban affairs. But, only seven states have rural affairs committees. In most instances, rural issues are lumped together under the agricultural affairs committee.

In some states, research and informational offices operate as a political arm of their caucus. Their function is to keep the public informed on legislative matters and to help formulate new policy initiatives. In most instances, these offices are staffed by generalists with roladexes the size of basketballs. Like committees, the information supplied by research and informational offices highlight the policy implications of executive, academic, and nongovernmental research. These offices also examine what other states are doing and whether or not their programs can be used as models. The most important role for research and informational offices, however, is getting new ideas on paper and getting the news out. Pennsylvania, New York, and Minnesota have the largest number of caucus research/informational offices. Over half the states have no such offices.

There are four general categories of legislative agencies: legal, administration, oversight, and research. The first two agencies focus on legislative housekeeping issues. That is, keeping track of statutes and code revisions, computer services, office supplies, etc. Oversight agencies do performance and fiscal evaluations of executive branch agencies. These audits are used to weed out corruption and ensure laws are being faithfully executed. Research agencies, like the Rural Center, examine policy issues in greater detail and make legislative recommendations. With a longer time frame than committee and caucus research offices, research agencies often contract projects to colleges and universities. Minnesota, Michigan, and Pennsylvania have the most legislative agencies. Eleven states have only one agency. The information supplied by these agencies can play an important role in setting the policy agenda and analyzing the issues.

Executive

The executive branch is at once an information cornucopia and a statistical labyrinth. Often mandated by law, executive agencies collect information on almost everything: from unemployment rates to birth weight; miles of sewage pipelines to the number of high school dropouts. At the federal level, the Census Bureau is, of course, the granddaddy of all informational sources. Despite the seemingly overabundance of information, getting the data you need can be challenging. With numerous agencies, finding the right office requires detective work. It also requires persistence. In many cases, your telephone call can be transferred at least a dozen times.

As an information source, executive agencies generally supply two types of information, numerical data and reports. The numerical data is just that, page after page of numbers on everything from employment to hospital beds. Fortunately, many agencies are beginning to provide the data on computer disks that can be easily downloaded into any computer. The availability of data on floppy disks overcomes one of the biggest hurdles in data analysis—inputting.

Although often voluminous, the reports published by executive agencies are useful for understanding the mechanics of a program or issue. They are also useful for assessing trends and as indicators of future executive initiatives. Along with empirical information, executive agencies also supply normative information. Through hearings and informal discussions, executive officials will communicate to legislators the problems of their agency's constituents and highlight solutions. Because politics is an interpersonal enterprise, such communications are often more important than data and reports.

Within any agency, information used in legislative decisions can come from any one of a dozen sources. Rarely is access restricted. The most common source, however, is the secretary's officer or the legislative liaison. Another important source of information are state data centers. In 70 percent of the fifty states, the lead data center is an executive agency. Ten percent of the state data centers are housed within the state library, the rest are located at universities.

Local Governments

Local governments can be an invaluable source of information to state policymakers. In many states, local officials are directly responsible for implementing programs. Also they have more direct contact with citizens than state officials. Consequently, when making policy decisions, local government officials are called upon to provide two types of information: implementation feasibility and level of grassroots support.

In large states, like Pennsylvania, statewide programs can be difficult to implement. For example, a program designed to help the urban homeless may be unworkable in a rural county. Local officials are often in the best position to judge the feasibility of such programs. Moreover, they provide information of the probable cost of the program and its likelihood of success. Similarly, a local official is often the first person residents call with a problem. This direct contact enables them to identify the need for new programs or problems with existing programs. It also enables them to judge where the greatest need is in their community. In rural communities, the input of local officials is especially important. Unlike urban areas that have a wide diversity of groups to support citizens' interests, rural residents often lack spokespersons. Local officials help give rural residents a voice in policy decisions.

Academic

In each state, colleges and universities are one of the greatest information depositories. With experts in almost every subject, these institutions have made valuable contributions to their state's policy research and formulation. As an informational source, colleges and university supply three types of information: consultation, basic research, and general information.

The consultation services provided by colleges and universities can range from advice on economic modeling to historical analysis. Consultants are used in the technical analysis of an issue. In addition to their expertise, consultants are called upon as independent sources of information. Legislators request college and universities to perform basic research in both the social and physical sciences. This information, for example, can be used to evaluate new management techniques or experimental road surfacing materials before they are implemented. In most instances, the basic research directly funded by general assemblies focuses on application rather than theory. Finally, colleges and universities supply policymakers with general information. Often this information comes from the schools' libraries. It is used to fill in the gaps. In most cases, it is accessed through informal phone calls to professors. In the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, this relationship has been formalized through a special liaison office and the state-owned and state-related universities.

Nongovernment

Nonggovernment sources of information are as important to policymakers as governmental sources. These sources represent alternative methods, special concerns, and competing ideas. Ignoring these informational sources would make for poor policies. As we will see shortly, information plays a vital role in building a consensus, both inside and outside government. There are, of course, many nongovernment actors that can supply information for making policy decisions. To save time, however, we will limit ourselves to just two: lobbyists and the media.

The role of a lobbyist is to influence policy decisions. Although the public views lobbyists with suspicion for advocating narrow interests, lobbyists provide reasoned opinions, information, and technical assistance to policymakers. This information, of course, represents the views of the organization the lobbyist is representing. Such views can be extremely useful when deciding policies that affect a particular group of people. Moveover, lobbyists enable a diverse organization to speak with one voice such as the township supervisors, rural school districts, rural utilities, etc.

Sometimes called the fourth branch of government, the media is an informational institution. The media plays an important role in identifying issues and pressuring policymakers to take action. However, one of the unique roles of the media is information dissemination. In the Pennsylvania General Assembly, each of the four caucuses puts together a daily packet of statewide newspaper clippings. These clippings enable both members and staffers to quickly gauge state opinions on a variety of policy issues. In addition, the media provides policymakers with an easily accessed forum from which to explain their actions.

INFORMATIONAL SHORTCOMINGS

Despite the many sources of information there are a number of informational shortcomings which plague all policy decisions. Some of these include information availability; time constraints; methodological considerations; and use of the "wrong" information. The first two of these shortcomings deal with informational access; the second two, with the information itself.

Information Availability

Information is not free. Someone has to define what is to be collected and how to collect it. Then the information must be collected, processed, analyzed, distributed, and finally stored. Because this process requires money, no government or private organization can collect all the information available on a subject. The shortage becomes all too apparent when it is needed to make policy decisions. For example, a recent Rural Center request was to develop an alternative formula for hospital medical assistance reimbursements. One of the major stumbling blocks was cost-of-living adjustments. Urban hospitals wanted one rate while rural hospitals wanted another. Each group claimed to have higher costs than the other. To confuse matters, the federal government's cost-of-living index is only collected for major urban areas and statewide. There is no rural cost-of-living index. The information was unavailable. Fortunately, the Center was able to convince committee members to accept a different criteria of unemployment and per capita income— data which was readily available. To make a long story short, the Rural Center's next research proposal targeted the creation of a rural cost-of-living index. Therefore, while information may seem abundant, it is not always the "right stuff."

Time Constraints

The Constitution requires a census to be collected every ten years. The information collected by the Census Bureau provides a very useful window from which to view changes in American society. Unfortunately, ten years is a long time to wait. Last year, while the Census data was being collected, the Rural Center, along with other agencies, was forced to rely on projections, estimations, and old data to describe rural conditions. Except for historical analysis, information, especially statistical data, has a very short shelf life. Consequently, one of the most serious problems in accessing information is its timeliness. No one wants outdated information, and no one likes to wait for new information to be released. As a result, agencies like the Rural Center are forced to rely on update sheets to keep policymakers informed.

Methodological Considerations

How was the information collected? How was it analyzed? What implicit assumptions were made? These are the types of questions that give analysts like myself sleepless nights. Understanding how information is collected and analyzed is important to avoid making wrong assumptions and wrong conclusions. This is especially critical when examining cause-and-effect relationships. Some lesser, but equally important, methodological considerations include how the information is being presented. It is amazing in the age of computer spreadsheets and $5 calculators how many data tables do not add up to their reported total. It is equally amazing how many variables are mislabeled and how many charts and figures are irrelevant to the subject being discussed. A word of advice: when asking someone why their columns don't add up, be very careful. Some people take their data very personally.

Using "Wrong" Information

Information comes in many forms. As a result, it is easy to use the wrong yardstick. When examining rural conditions, there are many measures that can be used such as unemployment rates, hospital beds per 1,000, number of daycare centers, etc. Each of these were designed to measure one thing. However, when formulating policies, single measures are forced to be surrogates for other conditions. For example, the number of hospital beds is frequently used to gauge county health care and unemployment as a yardstick to measure economic vitality. At best, such measures are only cloudy indicators of larger conditions. Moreover, these types of measures rarely address the quality of services or conditions. Having more daycare centers does not mean they are being managed properly or even efficiently. As a result, care should be taken in selecting social indicators.

USING INFORMATION IN POLICY DECISIONS

So far, we have examined some of the sources of information used by policymakers. We now need to go one step further and explore how legislators use information. From a policy making perspective, information has three overlapping roles: identifying new opportunities, analysis, and consensus building. Each of these roles are cumulative and cyclical. And, as we will see, each role utilizes information in a different context.

Identifying New Opportunities

Among policymakers, it is recognized that there are many problems facing society. Similarly, it is recognized that their are many solutions to these problems. The trick is to match the right problem with the right solution. Information can help by identifying new matches or new opportunities. Identifying new opportunities is one of the first steps in designing a rural policy. Information has two roles in this process: identifying needs/problems and identifying goals.

Identifying Needs/Problems

Rural residents face a host of needs and problems. Some of these are local or even private in nature, while others are state and national in scope. Identifying exactly what these needs and problems are as well as their root causes is an important first step in finding the right solution. Although such information can be gathered in a number of ways, the most common is through a needs assessment. A needs assessment is a detailed evaluation of a community's or region's resources. This assessment can be used to determine whether existing programs are meeting specific needs in areas like housing, transportation, health care, etc. Or, the assessment can be used to inventory issues rural residents want government to resolve.

In addition to a needs assessment, there are other ways to identify needs and problems. For example, public hearings can be a useful tool for gathering information. If held around the state, such hearings enable individuals and organizations to forcefully impress upon policymakers their area's needs and problems. A less intrusive way to identify issues is through data analysis. By carefully comparing indices, researchers can locate communities that are far below the state average, but have been overlooked by state policymakers.

As a policy tool, the information gathered through needs assessment and other methods is extremely useful for identifying problems and for measuring their severity. In addition, this information is useful for bringing the issue(s) to the attention of others— both inside and outside government. This is called getting an issue onto the policy agenda. In many state houses, rural concerns often take a backseat to those in urban areas. Finally, needs assessment can be used to justify budget allocations and priorities.

Identifying Goals

Although most government programs are design to resolve a specific problem, they also are used to address larger social and political goals. Piggybacking programs to larger goals is important for giving a program direction after its initial objectives are met. It is also an important indicator of program success or failure. For rural residents, program goals are useful for knowing up-front what the government is trying to do and why. This information is useful for communities putting together an action plan.

At the conception stage of a policy or program, information plays a key role in identifying goals. After problems or needs have been recognized, it is not always clear what exactly should be done. For example, in rural areas afflicted with high unemployment, should the government's goal be to persuade traditional manufacturers to reopen their factory gates with various incentives? Or should the state encourage new high-tech or service firms to locate in the region? Or should anything be done at all? These basic questions need to be decided before policies can be formulated. If not, it is more than likely that well-intentioned programs will end up with conflicting goals.

Information can help identify policy goals in one of three ways: first, it can identify the policy's target group(s). In some cases, the target group is self-evident, like teenage mothers or seniors on fixed incomes. In other cases, it is more general and vague, like consumers or manufacturers. Information can be used to locate and define groups with the greatest need. Studies have shown that the more specific the target group, the more successful the policy. Second, information can be used to decide policy outputs. That is, what will the policy end product look like? Will cash vouchers be used or counselling by social workers? Information is necessary for deciding what tools should be used in solving the problems. Finally, in order to link the new policy with existing policies and programs, information on those policies and programs is needed.

Information helps answer the questions How will this policy fit into the overall picture?; Is it redundant of other government policies?; and Does it conflict with other government goals? In our federalist system, state policymakers are especially cautious of these issues in order to ensure that state policies do not conflict with federal or local government initiatives.

Analysis

Up to this point, information is used to identify problems and goals. The next step is applying information to find solutions. In a legislative context, application means analysis. Information plays two roles in the analytical process: formulation of policy options and strategies; and second, outlining consequences of government actions. Each of these roles uses information to further define solutions to rural problems.

Brainstorming Solutions

Again, once the problem and goals have been identified, the next step is to determine how to implement a policy or program. This is no small task. Among the many decisions that need to be made are the selection of an implementing agency, funding patterns, and start-up time. Moreover, decisions must be made on how the program will work. Information plays a creative role in this process by identifying options.

Most state legislators punt when it comes to the nitty-gritty of how to implement a program. Instead, they outline the program goals, describe how it is to work, and then designate an executive agency to fill in the details. Deciding how a program is supposed to work has been the cause of more than one floor debate. However, in the early stages of the policy process, these decisions usually begin as a list of options. These options can range from the ridiculous to the sublime. They can also be partisan standard-bearers. The first use of information is to make a list of the possible ways to implement the program.

The sources of information used in this process varies. Some officials examine what different states are doing, while others review pertinent literature for theories and ideas, while still others evaluate previous programs to find out what worked and didn't work. The next use of information is to develop a criteria by which to narrow the options. This criteria usually involves political, financial, ethical, and other considerations. The weight each element receives is not always objective. Policies concerning hazardous waste sites, for example, are typically measured against a heavier political and environmental criteria than say a legal or economic development criteria. The end result of this process is a list of two or three workable policy options.

Outlining Policy Consequences

No problem exits in a vacuum. For every policy solution there is a reaction. Often these reactions can be extremely negative as witnessed in many states with wetland policies. In an effort to protect valuable wetland, farmers and developers have been unable to use the land to earn a living. Understanding policy consequences is important for avoiding unwanted consequences or negative spillovers. It is, of course, impossible to map out all the consequences of a policy. However, with information and analysis, the most glaring deficiencies can be removed in one of two ways: public input and analysis.

Legislators often seek public input into policies in order to measure in their constituency's reaction to a policy proposal. This input can come in many forms. The most formal are hearings. At a hearing, testimony is taken from groups both pro and con. There is also opportunity for these groups to ask questions and to convince legislators of the importance of their point. Although costly and time-consuming, hearings provide a forum for citizens and organizations to voice their concerns. Next to hearings is lobbying. There are many ways to lobby elected officials. Organizations and associations typically employ professional "legislative liaisons." Their job is to keep the organization and its members informed of policy changes and to influence policy decisions. Again, these are rarely cigar chomping, backslapping individuals. Instead, they are usually professionals that provide reasoned opinions and technical assistance to policymakers. In some cases, these lobbyists are former legislative staffers. Unorganized groups can also lobby effectively. By meeting individually with legislators or through protest rallies, these groups can have an impact on policy decisions. An important point to remember is that policy-making involves compromise. Rarely is it a zero-sum game.

A less visible, but equally important, method of identifying and weighing the consequences of legislation is bill analysis. Such analysis can involve cost-benefit analysis, computer modeling, or other types of scientific inquiry. And because policymakers are not technocrats, there is also the analysis of political repercussions. Both types of analyses are important for outlining the consequences of a policy proposal. The information gleaned from this process is extremely useful in the next phase— consensus building.

Consensus Building

One of the most important roles of information in policy-making is consensus building. A consensus is necessary in order to ensure cooperation and agreement among policymakers. It is also needed to enact policy and programs. Yet, as we all know, achieving a consensus is never easy. On rural issues it can be exceedingly difficult. In the Pennsylvania House, for example, about 28 percent of members represent rural districts. Getting these lawmakers to agree to a common policy strategy is difficult enough, let alone getting the rest of the House to go along. There are a number of ways information and communications can be used to build a consensus. The most common method is to create a cooperative environment.

Creating a Cooperative Environment

With different groups having different agendas, rural policy can become a political football. Information can de-emphasize the political aspect of the debate by identifying areas of cooperation. Rural needs and problems are often exactly the same as those of highly urbanized areas. Many rural Pennsylvania counties, for example, suffer the same crime rates, illiteracy, teenage-pregnancies per capita as does the city of Philadelphia on a per capita basis. The only difference is that urban issues tend to be more obvious because of their visibility. Information can be used to point out the similarities between urban and rural areas. By stressing the similarities rather than the differences, cooperation can be achieved.

Cooperation can also be encouraged by using information to support common ideas or objectives. While some groups are naturally antagonistic, they may share common values or goals. Republicans and Democrats disagree on many issues. However, they do agree on some things like, increasing federal aid, expanding employment opportunities, and providing good education. These areas of cooperation usually involve outside resources or programs that cost little or nothing. Providing information on these "win-win" situations can be extremely useful in building cooperation.

Information does not always guarantee that the best policy will be selected. Selecting a policy involves persuasion, influence, and compromise. Information, however, can take the edge off and make selection a cooperative effort. By using such methods, far more can be accomplished.

MAKING INFORMATION MORE USEFUL

To conclude my remarks, I would like to leave with you some tips on making information more valuable to policymakers. There are a number of ways to increase the value of information. From my experience, most of them emphasize the way the information is communicated, rather than the information itself. Therefore, when presenting information to policymakers, there are three rules I follow:

Individualizing Information

Each day, legislators receive mountains of reports, studies, and updates. The likelihood that any of it is read is directly proportional to size of the document and to whether or not the policymaker is familiar with you or your organization. By individualizing information, your chances increase that the report will at least get skimmed. Individualizing information requires preparation. It requires knowing who the policymaker's constituents are and what are his or her interests.

Most legislators have two types of constituencies. The first and most important are the district voters. Locating these constituents only requires a legislative map. A comparison between district voters and statewide or national trends is usually enough to grab the attention of most legislators. The second type of constituent can be a little more difficult to pinpoint. It is comprised of agencies, organizations, and citizens who are stakeholders in issues the policymaker is interested in. For example, in the area of telecommunications, some of the constituents would include the telephone companies, state regulatory agencies, tele-link businesses, telephone customers, etc. There are a number of ways to identify these secondary constituents. The easiest is to look at the committee assignments. Normally, policymakers are assigned to committees that focus on their interest. Another way is to examine the type of legislation he or she introduces and who it will affect. However, the best way to identify a policymaker's interest is a face-to-face meeting. The purpose of individualizing information is to ensure the material you are presenting is relevant to the policymaker.

Keep It Simple

One of the truisms of government is that thick reports go unread. Rarely does size or weight of the information matter. What does matter is whether or not the facts or ideas can be easily understood and used to address policy issues. Consequently, information should be presented to policymakers in an eye-catching, easy-to-read format.

Desktop publishing has made information presentation easy and fun. With dozens of graphic programs available, small agencies like the Rural Center have been able to increase their outreach and visibility. It has also enabled us to quickly individualize letters and reports with data about a member's district. While computers can enhance any document, there are a number of rules to follow: first, make graphs as simple as possible. Also make sure all variables are labeled. Second, make sure the text is easy-to-read. Ideally, it should be on an eighth-grade reading level. Third, always enclose an executive summary page that highlights the main point. And fourth, don't overload the reader with data. Attaching column after column of numbers will do little to enhance your argument if no one reads it. In short, when providing data to policymakers remember that, "simple is best." Although you might feel like you are providing sound bites, the policymaker can always call you for more information.

MAKING INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE

One of the best ways to make the information you collected valuable is to make it accessible. Access is important for giving policymakers and others the information necessary to make informed decisions. There are a number of ways to make information accessible. At the high-tech end, there are electronic bulletin boards where data and other information can be accessed and downloaded through a computer modem. A low-cost approach is to encourage policymakers to call for information. At the Rural Center, most of the information requests are taken over the telephone. This personal contact enables us to better identify the types of information they need. Also, if the information is unavailable, the request allows us to explain why and to determine whether a research project is required.

Information access is a two-way street. In addition to policymakers coming to you for information, you can go to them. Information can be used to push policymakers to take up issues deemed important for rural areas. Similarly, the same information can be used to inform others outside of government concerning issues facing rural residents. The Rural Center has worked closely with outside groups to inform them on rural issues and to help identify new opportunities. When taking information to policymakers or others, care is needed to maintain organizational legitimacy. In a partisan political environment, it is may be necessary to say no.

CONCLUSION

Despite what the newspapers say, policy-making is not all political. Information does play a vital role in identifying needs and goals. It is also necessary for analyzing solutions and outlining consequences. Finally, information is needed to build consensus. Information used in policy-making comes from many sources. Some of the more notable include legislative committees and agencies, executive agencies, local officials, academics, and nongovernment organizations. The information they provide, however, is not without its shortcomings. A few of these shortcomings include availability, time constraints, and other methodological considerations.

From a rural perspective, information has a dual role. First, it is used to inform policymakers rural residents have many unmet needs. Second, it is used to identify new opportunities to build a better rural future. While information has its limits, it is the most useful tool available. Indeed, as Don Dillman pointed out, "throughout this century, information has been used to encourage the substitution of energy and natural resources for labor. Now information is being substituted for all three."

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THE USE OF STATE INFORMATION RESOURCES

by

Howard F. McGinn

I'd like to open my remarks this morning by recalling the War of 1812. This was a war that should never have occurred. There were reasons, of course, for the antagonism between Great Britain and the United States. The British had been conscripting American sailors into the Royal Navy and in an attempt to limit American Trade with France and Continental Europe, Parliament had enacted the Orders-in Council decree that permitted the Royal Navy to blockade the American coast and stop American ships from trading with the Continent. The Americans, for their part, relished the chance to invade Canada and perhaps add that part of the Empire to the United States. But as I said, this war should not have occurred. On June 18, 1812, Congress declared war on Great Britain. What Congress did not know, however, was that the British had just suffered through a terrible winter and on July 16, 1812, two days before the United States declared war, Parliament had rescinded the Orders-in-Council decree. Today this war would not have occurred because the news of the action of Parliament would have been reported live on CNN and War would probably have been averted. In 1812, it took at least one month for the information to cross the Atlantic. The irony of this war, of course, is that its greatest battle, the Battle of New Orleans, occurred two weeks after a peace treaty between the two nations had been signed in Ghent, Belgium. News of the signing of the treaty took seven weeks to reach the United States but by then the battle had occurred and over 2,000 British soldiers perished.

In today's world of rapid communication where world events are televised live such a series of occurrances would be unthinkable, yet while our states, cities, counties, and their businesses and citizens have come to accept the fact that CNN or ABC or CBS will instantly transmit information about world events as they happen, these same states and citizens are not aware of, are unable to understand, or have not accepted the omnipresence of instantaneous availability to information that could affect their lives in a much more direct manner than the televised events in Moscow, Baghdad, or Peking.

For the past five years the state of North Carolina has been constructing a statewide system called the North Carolina Information Network whose sole function is to deliver electronic information for consumption by all sectors of the community into every town and county in the state whether that town is high in the Smokey Mountains or on the Outer Banks. Most of this information, however, has been developed for the business community. My comments today are based on the State Library's ongoing experience in constructing this information infrastructure, this information network. I will try to give equal time to our failures and problems as well as our successes. My comments will be divided into these main topic areas:

1. data communications;
2. product development; and
3. marketing/education.

First, though, I think some general comments about the development and operation of this type of program are necessary.

State information resources must be viewed as investments made by taxpayers in information assets. Because information is able to be stored and delivered in multiple ways, the term "information assets" should include traditional methods of information storage and delivery such as books, periodicals, and film as well as the constantly developing world of electronic media - information stored on videotape, compact discs, hard discs, floppy discs, CD-ROM databases, magnetic tape and so forth. Secondly, information assets should include any type of information delivery system operated by the state. These systems would range from standard vehicle-based courier service to interactive television networks to high speed data telecommunications. The term should especially be understood to include the educational institutions at all levels supported by state funding. This all inclusive approach is necessary because in order to effectively bring a state and its communities, particularly rural communiities modern electronic information services, the use of all of these components need to be choreographed so that citizens receive their proper return on the investment made in information assets. This approach demands that state agencies change their perception of information asset ownership and access. Information resources purchased by any department of the University of North Carolina or Central Carolina Community College or Lee County Senior High School or the State Library are as eligible for use by the public as those investments made by public libraries.

Thirdly, the North Carolina Information Network (hereafter called the Network) was developed within the cultural, economic, political and educational framework of the state to meet specific needs in North Carolina. What worked in North Carolina may fail in Maine or New Hampshire and, conversely, what failed in our state may work in your state. This is simply a reaffirmation of the old marketing axiom that postulates that products and services are developed to meet the needs of specific market segments whose characteristics are similar and are understood. This network was constructed with relatively little new investment of federal, state or local tax dollars. In most states the investment in the assets of an electronic information network is being made on a daily basis.

Finally, unlike the communications problems of the War of 1812, the difficulty the State Library of North Carolina has experienced is not delivering vital information in a timely manner. It is able to deliver massive amounts of information to any location in the state as quickly as affordable modern technology allows. The problem, rather, is how to use the information once it is sent to the town. I will return to this problem later. Let me move on then to the first of the topics mentioned above - data communications.

DATA COMMUNICATIONS

Since the beginning of the construction of the Network, access to quality, reliable telecommunications for the transmission of data has been the primary developmental concern. Access to data networks is especially crucial in states that are predominantly rural and though North Carolina is the tenth largest state in the country when ranked by population it is predominantly a rural state with few large cities. The state moreover, has a large land mass for an eastern state and it possesses significant geographical barriers like the 7,000 foot mountains and the remote barrier islands. It possesses too, that bain of all telecommunications, many local "Ma and Pa" telephone companies.

Because the network's first product offerings were the interlibrary loan services offered by the Online Computer Library Center, commonly called OCLC, headquartered in Dublin, Ohio, and homegrown electronic bulletin boards, reliable, access to reliable telecommunications systems was essential, especially in rural areas, if local communities were to buy into the Network. Access to OCLC was not a serious problem since it did provide service to its computer through Compuserve and a non-toll free 800 line. The bulletin boards were another matter. The original plan had been to mount the boards on the University of North Carolina Educational Computing Service's electronic mail/bulletin board system in the Research Triangle Park. In 1986 it was decided that this would not work because the command structure needed to be learned to use the University's program at that time was not user friendly, and access to the system from distant areas demanded much data switching in the local "ma and Pa" telephone companies. The State Library, as a result, choose the Western Union Easylink system (now owned by A.T. & T.) as the distributer of the bulletin boards and electronic mail service. Western Union was easy to use and, most importantly, offered access in all parts of the state to reliable telecommunications.

In the past five years, the situation has changed considerably. The heavy use of both OCLC and the bulletin boards and the rapid increase of information products offered by the Network demanded that the State Library find a more economical delivery system. The choice was easy - the University of North Carolina Educational Computing Service and its data telecommunications system called LINCNET. The University had been rapidly building capacity and expanding access to LINCNET over the five year period. In fact the State Library had aided the expansion through LSCA Title III grants for the purchase of equipment for the system backbone. By 1990, LINCNET had established nodes on its X.25, packet network in over 80 institutions (including the State

Library), and provided a linkeage to BITNET and INTERNET to these institutions, most of which were in rural areas. The State Library then, through a contractual arrangement with the University, began to fund hardware installations at selected node sites across the state. This local node enhancement now allowed local libraries to dial a local telephone number to access the LINCNET system.

By the end of 1992, it is anticipated that 90% of the state will have access to the LINCNET system. This access is especially important since LINCNET will be the statewide component of the National Research Educational Network (NREN). I'd like to emphasize an important point made earlier - the State Library achieved this rapid expansion of access to quality, reliable high speed data communications because of cooperation. There was no way it could have constructed its own LINCNET. The signing of an interagency contract with the University of North Carolina General Administration opened up new sources of customers and funding to the University while it brought service to rural areas. Both institutions have benefited. The relationship also has very positive political implications. But what happened to those bulletin boards on Western Union? Let me move on to topic two - Product Development.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

The omnipresence of personal computers in state government offices has permanently affected the ways state governments create, manage, and distribute public information. As you are well aware, most states are attempting to develop policies to control this wealth of electronic data and assure that public information is not deliberately erased, altered or hidden. The personal computer, however, has created many opportunities for the public to gain access to the valuable information it purchases through the work of state employees. When the State Library's Network began operations, it faced the same problems the fledgling radio and television networks of the 1920's and 1940's faced - lack of programming. The Network was able to distribute information. The problem was gaining information to distribute. Some of the early bulletin boards created and distributed by the Network now seem primitive, even comical. Bulletin boards were created and distributed just to fill air time but some filled a need. The Network's growth began when the State

Library developed a program with the state's Office of Purchase and Contract. The program, the North Carolina Automated Purchase Directory, is a series of bulletin boards that lists all contracts for all goods and services being put out for bid by state government, all highway construction contracts, and contracts for the renovation and/or construction of all state owned buildings. For the first time, people in all parts of the state, not just those living near Raleigh, are able to see what the state is buying and bid on the contracts. Under the old system, information about just 50% of the contracts was able to be obtained because a person had to subscribe to a printed listing service. Under the new electronic system, almost 100% of the contracts are listed and updated twice a week. Business people can obtain the information at their local public library, community college, or academic library. Corporate libraries have direct access. Because of port capacity the Network has not been able to allow direct access by consumers. Useage patterns show that the main users and beneficiaries are entrepreneurs, small paving contractors and small construction companies.

The success of this program prompted the state's Secretary of Administration and The State Personnel Director to ask the State Library to work with them to create electronic listings of state job vacancies. These lists were easily created from the master files maintained by the Office of Personnel and were tested over a six month period in different communities across North Carolina. Because the libraries on the state's large military bases such as Ft. Bragg and Camp Lejeune were included in the test, spouses of military personnel sent to the Persian Gulf last year were able to find employment with the state to help carry their families through the difficult financial period. Here are examples of the personnel listings.

Other bulletin boards designed for use by businesses and local government are provided in conjunction with the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, the North Carolina Biotechnology Center, the League of Municipalities and other agencies and associations. Programs under development include a small business buyer-suplier database, listings of appointees to state government boards and commissions, listings of those in professions licensed by the state who have had their license suspended, the monthly financial reports from the Secretary of Revenue, listings of sites of abandoned gasoline storage tanks and other types of data.

I mentioned before that the bulletin boards are being moved. The Network is in the process of transferring this information to its parent agency's computer. The State Library is a Division of the Department of Cultural Resources. The Department's computer will shortly become an address on INTERNET and will be able to be accessed by institutions around the world. This leads me to new programs.

The State Library will soon enter into an agreement with a mid-western state to test the exchange of state information generated by the two states. North Carolina already participates in an electronic interlibrary loan system designed for small rural libraries with other states in the southeast. By becoming an INTERNET address, the State Library will be able to work with the state's Department of Commerce offices in Europe and Asia in bringing business and investment to the state. The Library's role as the chief provider of statistical, demographic, financial and other types of data to corporations, businesses, and local governments in North Carolina was recently enforced by the signing of an agreement with the State Data Center and the state's Office of Planning. The State Data Center will concentrate on the development of information programs; the State Library and its Network will be responsible for the marketing of these services.

One final new program note. In order for a consumer-oriented network of this type to be effective, it must be opportunistic. This past week I have started discussions with the North Carolina Supercomputer Center staff about the development of a digital library. This library would concentrate, initially, on North Carolina subjects. Because of the power of the supercomputer, a person interested in studying Sen. Sam Ervin would be able to call up the text of the Senator's Watergate Hearing speeches, then watch and listen to the Senator deliver the speeches. For sports fans, the menu would offer Michael Jordan, for jazz fans, John Coultrain, for voyuers, Jim Bakker and so forth. The computing power of the Cray Computer would also enable students to simulate wetlands environments, waste treatment site construction, re-enactments of the Battle of King's Mountain. Access would be through LINCNET and made available to all of those same small towns.

PROBLEMS

As with any human endeavor, there have been and will be problems. The major difficulties have been, as you might expect, technical, but they are being solved. It has also been difficult to convince some library directors that the electronic information age is here to stay. That convincing is being accomplished by the closing down of some State Library manually provided services and the requirement that all libraries in the state use the Network for certain services. The bizarre economic conditions that exist on both the state and local levels has caused some disruption. The main problem, however, is education. How does one convince a small town businessperson who has turned an annual profit for twenty ,ears that he or she could use this information? How do you teach new and established businesses to use marketing or financial data that is sometimes raw and requires interpretation? How do you teach information literacy when the educational systems in the state need massive overhauling? While the primary role of the library is to deliver information, librarians have increasingly found themselves serving as teachers of the young and old, as job counselors, as social workers. Yet no funds or public recognition are received for these purposes. More money is spent on the state information resources called education than any other area. Until the educational community is able to clean its own house and provide the citizens a proper return on the investment in education, progress in helping local businesses and governments prosper in the information economy will be hampered. Until the libraries, especially the public libraries in both urban and rural areas, are provided the financial and personnel resources needed to facilitate this transition, local development will be hampered. I speak only of North Carolina. I suspect, however, we are not alone.

There are many other benefits that have been realized by the construction of the Network that could be discussed. But if you were to ask me to pinpoint the major benefits resulting from this program I would list the following: First, the deliverance of the tools needed to function in an information driven economy to rural areas traditionally hampered by geographic barriers; secondly, the increased return to the citizens of the state on the investment made in information assets because of increased cooperation between state agencies; thirdly, increased access to public information. The First Amendment still lives. Finally, the creation of important new roles and responsibilities for the state's libraries, especially public libraries. Perhaps the delivery of these types of services will help them in their perpetual battle for sufficient funding and change the public's erroneous perception of the public library from one of a warm fuzzy place where parents store their children after school to the more truthful image of the library as the community's information center, in a way, its information public utility. I am convinced that governments that do not support the construction of a library-based infrastructure to help their communities enter the now-arrived information age must some day be ready to answer to their taxpayers why they chose obsolescence over the future. That problem, though, may be moot. That town may no longer exist. Let us all take steps to make sure our rural areas are present to greet the 21st Century.

At the time of this presentation, Howard McGinn was State Librarian of North Carolina in Raleigh, North Carolina. He is currently Director of the Emporia Public Library in Emporia, Kansas.

KEY ISSUES IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

by

Daryl Heasley

OVERVIEW

An essential fact faces most rural localities; as development occurs many small and rural communities are falling behind their metropolitan and suburban counterparts in dealing adequately with the issues at hand. Moreover, policies and practices intended to enhance rural development have been fragmented or ineffectively implemented.

Leaders and policy makers have been confused about the meaning of rural development. To many, rural implies an agricultural arena for food and fiber production, while development implies change, growth, and ready access to the products and services of an urban society. Today, while development still implies better access to goods and services, rural implies low population density and uneven access to the opportunities that are occurring in more highly "urbanized" localities. Enhancement of agriculture and other rural natural resources does not necessarily enhance social and economic development in rural areas.

Rural localities are beset by an increasingly complex set of economic, social, environmental, and political forces stemming from both the U.S. metropolitan and global societies. National and worldwide economic restructuring with or without the complicity of national and local politics, produces shifts in local economic and natural-resource infrastructures. Other forces, endemic to the fabric of American society, place increasing demands on local institutions to provide more effective services while receiving decreasing public support. Institutions for education, health care, youth and family services, families at risk, social equity, elderly and handicapped care, and infrastructural maintenance and improvement are additional pressures to change and reorganize for greater effectiveness.

While rural localities are affected by these forces, they often lack the individual and organizational resources, expertise, and problem solving skills required to deal effectively with their situations. Many rural localities have volunteer, part-time leaders and managers, while their urban counterparts engage full-time professionals to deal with public issues. Efforts to maintain and improve the viability and well-being of rural areas must be guided by an awareness of such structural imbalances. Rural development programs require strategies sensitive to these similarities and to unique needs.

Structural and economic changes are creating new opportunities for rural economies while at the same time making them more vulnerable. Transportation and information linkages in rural areas are creating new patterns of employment, marketing, and other ties; but the rapidly increasing use can strain the physical infrastructure of these localities.

Environmental pressures, economic opportunities and challenges, and other changes will require greater human capital and institutional capacity. Our most critical resources for managing changes in rural areas are knowledgeable people and the viable groups they form. Based on the preceding here are key concepts driving a strategy for rural development.

1. Constructively Using the Natural Environment in an Urbanizing Region.
2. Enhance Rural Economic Productivity and Adaptability.
3. Enhance Institutions that Contribute to the Well-Being of Individuals, Families, and Communities.
4. Enhance Policy Leadership, Management Capacity, and Strategic Planning to Support Rural Community Viability.

These issues are not the only ones affecting rural areas. But, they are among those that are having the greatest impacts, and they are at the core of rural development strategies. They also provide excellent opportunities for developing, implementing, and evaluating rural development programs. Since the issues are so interrelated, the focus for rural development must be holistic, encompassing aspects of all four issue areas, and their implications for individuals, families, communities, and institutions serving rural people.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES EXPANDED

If the quantity and quality of natural resources in the U.S. and world wide are to be maintained for current and multi-future uses, traditional approaches to their management and use must be changed. Attention must be given to a more holistic perspective, one that is guided by and in tune with a multi-objective approach. This approach must accommodate the differing objectives of rural resource owners, urban dwellers, and the general public who rely on rural land, air, and water resources for sustenance, recreation, and aesthetics. New awareness of the severe frictions among competing interests has led to increasing regulation of our rural resources.

We need to shift toward constructive use of these rural resources, incorporating current production uses with regeneration and preservation practices for future generations. This change will require an adjustment from single-use practices to more multiple-use strategies.

Economic Productivity

Major socio-economic changes are under way that will affect the ability of the U.S. to maintain productive and sustainable rural economies. Rural economies face particular problems in adapting to these changes because of their small size, geographic isolation, low population density, lack of employment diversification, and traditional dependence on natural-resource based industries and routine manufacturing. Forces of change include:

(1) Structural realignments affecting the economic bases of rural economies. Among the key realignments are: integration with the global marketplace, technological innovations influencing the labor, management and capital requirements of rural businesses, need for the value-added industry, which sustains natural resource economies in remote areas of our region.

(2) Cyclical trends in the national and global economies affecting the stability and growth of local rural economies. These trends include small, industrially specialized (manufacturing-dependent) econo

mies, which are particularly vulnerable to macro-economic shifts; and new opportunities for businesses to anticipate and plan for such challenges.

(3) More effective transportation and information linkages, which have increased rural-urban and regional economic integration. Such integration provides opportunities for employment, marketing, tourism, and inter-local cooperation.

Activities should focus on ameliorating problems and taking advantage of potential opportunities to help public and private decision makers adjust to the changes.

Institutions

Consistent with the premise that all people, regardless of age, race, ethnic origin, or location, should have equal access to the services they need for social well being. The U.S. and local areas must respond to the fact that existing services are not meeting the special needs of some population groupings, especially in rural areas. In particular, federal, state, and especially local entities are challenged to perform three key tasks: to assess the delivery of services to rural communities, families, and individuals; to inform policy makers and others of the unique and pressing needs of rural groupings for human services; and to join with other groups and organizations in the search for ways of meeting these unmet needs.

Among the many population segments in the rural areas of the U.S. and among the many service needs that affect rural well-being, some groupings and services stand out as deserving top priority in rural development planning and programming. Groupings in urgent need of special attention in small and rural areas include age-related population segments (youth and the elderly), poor and disadvantaged individuals and families, and the culturally diverse groupings now found in many rural communities. Service areas that require special attention include housing, nutrition, health, education, transportation, and communications. The objective of information providers in responding to these needs is to present an improved understanding of issues, choices, and possible policy initiatives to service providers, service consumers, policy makers, and the community (including voters and taxpayers).

Leadership and Management

Agendas of local leaders and decision makers in small and rural localities are becoming more controversial, complex, and technical. Increasing societal awareness of various issues places new burdens on rural leaders and administrators and requires a breadth of decision making on a scale not previously faced in rural localities.

These issues include concerns about the environment and natural resources; roads, highways, and infrastructure; environmental impacts; waste management and water quality; fire protection and law enforcement; health care and recreation; education and social service; liability insurance and risk management; and changing local economies and changing local economic export and tax bases.

The ability and effectiveness of local officials to provide public policy direction in response to societal demands represented by federal and state mandates, and to provide appropriate and adequate public services, depend on the adequacy of local institutions and their decision making and implementation methods. Part-time citizen politicians, high turnover in leadership and policy positions, shortage of staff to provide for technical expertise and administration, and increased financial pressures to meet growing internal and mandated demands all leave rural localities at a disadvantage relative to more urban places. If rural localities are to function effectively in dealing with the issues they face, sophisticated and workable planning and policies that require access to considerable expertise must be generated. Plans and policies must then be managed and administered efficiently to take advantage of available local resources and future opportunities.

If policy leadership, management capacity, and strategic planning to support rural community governance are to be enhanced, information must be useful, timely deliverable, workable, affordable, and have utility for users.

So, what are some roles for libraries and librarians in helping to ameliorate rural development issues?

- *Publicize* the types of information you can make available to agencies, organizations, local governmental units, institutions, special interest groups and communities which are addressing the four key rural development issues. Many of these established entities, especially, are not aware of the range of information local libraries, through the county, state, and national systems can access.
- *Initiate* special information packages for such entities. Do not wait for a visit, you be the visitor!
- *Feature* a local public issue and the accompanying resources you can access to "tease the curiosity" of library patrons.
- *Suggest/Offer* the library meeting room for such purposes.
- *Involve* yourself as an interested citizen and as a librarian in an issue of your choice.
- *Balance* proactive, assertive roles with reactive, passive roles. This point summarizes the above points.

The task demands the highest level of scholarly research as well as delivery of useful products to support and maximize the local educational outreach effort. The library systems are uniquely well adapted and explicitly chartered to serve rural America. These units must work together with other units that may be interested in rural development. If a balanced strategy is to result, this effort must focus on the relationship of individuals, families, institutions, and communities with the environment. In the end, a viable rural community is one that has strength demographically, socially, and economically. Such strengths depend on equitable distribution of and access to goods and services. They also depend on sustainable environmental conservation practices among people in the rural and metropolitan areas of the U.S.

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THE RURAL INFORMATION CENTER:

FEDERAL AND STATE COOPERATION EXPANDS INFORMATION ACCESS

by

Patricia La Caille John

Two USDA agencies, the National Agricultural Library and the Extension Service, originally established the Rural Information Center (RIC) in the fall of 1987 as a joint project, a project which expanded in 1988 to a Federal-State partnership to include the nationwide Cooperative Extension Service network.

RIC continues to coordinate with USDA and other Federal agencies with rural development programs to expand the program at the Federal level. Since 1990 RIC has become a focal point for Federal cooperation and program expansion as a result of mandates from President Bush and the White House Economic Policy Council Working Group on Rural Development and from the Congress. The involvement of USDA and other Federal agencies backed up and reinforced those mandates.

President Bush's rural economic development initiative recommended providing a center to give technical assistance and detailed information on Federal programs that service rural communities. This initiative was to take the form of an expansion of RIC and the participation of all relevant Federal agencies. A key RIC function was to provide toll-free access through an 800 telephone number.

In addition, the cabinet-level White House Economic Policy Council Working Group on Rural Development, chaired by then Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter, in its January 1990 report, *Rural Economic Development for* *the '90s: A Presidential Initiative,* recommended that the Federal government strengthen RIC resources and capabilities.

In April 1990, shortly after this report was released, Secretary Yeutter invited the White House Economic Policy Council Working Group on Rural Development, which includes representatives of a dozen executive branch departments and major agencies, to visit RIC for an overview. The working group spent a morning at NAL learning about RIC's information resources and discussing cooperative Federal efforts.

Congress greatly expanded RIC's responsibility level to that of a national rural information center clearinghouse in the 1990 Farm Bill. That legislation required that RIC provide information about rural programs and services offered by Federal, state, and local agencies, as well as about offerings of non-profit organizations and institutions. Such rural services would include assistance programs for job training, education, health care, economic development assistance, and emotional and financial counseling. Congress provided in the legislation an annual authorization of $500,000 for five years (fiscal years 1990-1994) for RIC to establish access to a comprehensive database of rural assistance programs from all levels of the public and private sector.

Congress also provided one additional substantial requirement for RIC, though it did not provide funding authorization. It directed that RIC, in cooperation with the extension service in each state, was to develop, maintain, and provide to each community, and make accessible to any other interested parties, a leadership training catalog. Congress also directed that RIC was to have the responsibility of disseminating information it "possesses" on rural health and safety as part of the rural health and safety education grant programs in the states, and that USDA's Rural Electrification Administration's technical assistance unit was to make use of RIC resources.

RIC enjoys great support from the USDA Office of the Under Secretary for Small Community and Rural Development. The Under Secretary's office has long promoted the idea of Federal agency cooperative staffing and financing as a means to expand RIC's resources and information delivery capabilities. In fact, last year former Secretary Bergland, then Secretary Yeutter, Under

Secretary Vautour, and Assistant Under Secretary Hill visited RIC to learn more about the center's capabilities, successes, and cooperative agency efforts.

At the direction of President Bush's rural development initiative USDA, under the guidance of the Chair of the White House Economic Policy Council Working Group on Rural Development Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan, and other Federal agencies with rural programs, are continuing to assist RIC's expansion through a variety of cooperative efforts.

RIC ESTABLISHES RURAL HEALTH INFORMATION SERVICES

A Federal cooperative effort which greatly strengthened RIC's capabilities is a joint effort between USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The idea germinated in September 1989 and was underway within six months.

Congress mandated in the 1987 Social Security Act that the DHHS Office of Rural Health Policy (ORHP) establish a national rural health information clearinghouse service to collect and disseminate rural health care information, research findings, and innovative health care delivery techniques to rural areas.

The ORHP staff has used RIC since it expanded nationally in 1988. The ORHP Director, Jeffrey Human, liked the RIC information service model and in September 1989 he approached RIC with the proposal of incorporating the DHHS rural health center clearinghouse mandate with RIC. The joint effort would prevent duplicating rural Federal efforts. ORHP would also be able to utilize the Cooperative Extension Service's nation-wide network to disseminate rural health information to local communities and locate the health information clearinghouse at a national library.

NAL and DHHS signed a three-year interagency agreement in February 1990 in which NAL agreed to establish a rural health information service by October 1990. The service would function as a specialized subject component of RIC. This agreement combined two congressionally mandated clearinghouses while fully supporting the cooperative approach recommended in President Bush's rural development initiative. The health component is known as the Rural Information Center Health Service, or RICHS.

As part of the agreement with ORHP RIC acquired an 800 telephone number in order to provide easy access for rural officials, communities, organizations, and individuals seeking rural health and economic development information. Under this interagency agreement DHHS will transfer nearly a million dollars to RIC to implement and operate RICHS during fiscal years 1991 and 1992. NAL agreed to give RIC a new staff position and RIC was able to hire a health librarian in September 1990 who serves as the RICHS team leader.

In October 1990 NAL announced RICHS' implementation. However, the unprecedented delay of approval of the fiscal year 1991 Federal budget, which nearly shut down the Federal government, subsequently delayed the transferring of DHHS funds until the end of January 1991 and the hiring of two additional health information specialists until April. Unfortunately RIC staff members were in the unpleasant position of operating an 800 number with a workload increase in excess of 100% for six months without the anticipated additional RICHS staff. RIC has now recovered from the increased request load and plans to further expand the health information services in 1991.

In order to complete the staffing of the RICHS operation RIC initiated a cooperative agreement with the University of Maryland's Cooperative Extension Service (CES). Maryland's CES readily agreed to support the RIC program by entering into this agreement because RIC was a joint extension service project. The agreement allowed RIC to hire two health information specialists, members of the University's extension facility, and a secretary, a Maryland state employee. The RICHS operation has been not only an example of successful Federal interagency cooperation effort but Federal-state partnership as well.

There is an additional Federal cooperative twist to the RICHS project. Being able to take advantage of the Federal extension service partnership, Myron Johnsrud, the USDA Extension Service Administrator, obtained approval from the Secretary of Agriculture for the Extension Service to recruit a state extension service rural health specialist on a twelve-month Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) appointment. RIC funds the appointment which allows the USDA Extension Service to recruit annually a Cooperative Extension Service specialist to assist the RICHS staff's network and information delivery capabilities. The Extension Service is announcing the position nation-wide; once it makes a selection it will sign an agreement with the university of the successful candidate. RIC is to fund living expenses and partial salary; the state extension service is to fund the remaining salary; and the Federal extension service is to provide RIC with the IPA position. This example is about as creative a recruitment partnership one is likely to find in the Federal government.

Although RIC has concentrated its efforts over the past year to greatly expand its capabilities to respond to rural health requests, it has been processing questions about rural health care access and delivery systems, health care personnel recruitment and retention, and hospital closures since its implementation in 1987.

The crisis of health care access and delivery in many rural areas is an economic issue as well as a health care issue. According to a 1988 U.S. Senate staff report to the Special Committee on Aging on the health care challenge:

> The rural hospital often plays a pivotal role in the life of the community. It is not only the heart of the local health care delivery system, but is also a source of civic pride and a key player in the community's efforts to attract and retain physicians and other health care personnel... The fact that the presence of a hospital virtually guarantees a steady flow of funds into a rural community (such as public and private insurance payments) cannot be underestimated. These funds have a substantial direct and indirect impact on local employment and business prosperity since the hospital is generally the largest or second largest employer as well as a major purchaser of goods. Moreover, the community's prospects for future economic development — attracting and retaining employers — are often inextricably linked with the maintenance of a viable health care delivery system. (U. S. Senate, 1988)

Consequently, if a rural community cannot recruit and retain doctors or maintain an economy strong enough to keep its hospital or clinic open the community loses not only immediate health care access for its residents but also one of the largest community employers and future business expansion opportunities. One of every ten rural hospitals closed during each year in the

1980s and currently 24% (600 of 2,500) rural hospitals are estimated to be at risk of closure in the next few years. (Swink & Cacic, 1991)

Ironically, while many rural hospitals are facing bankruptcy:

> Nationwide, over the past year the health-services industries have been the only major sector of the national economy to grow. In the face of recession, health-care employers added 383,000 jobs between July 1990 and July 1991, according to the U.S. Labor Department. That's an increase of 4.9%, while the overall number of jobs in the private sector dwindled 1.3%. More than 9% of all private, nonagricultural workers in the U.S. are now employed in the health-delivery services, up from 3% in 1960. (Stout, 1991)

Although this recent health-care service industry growth has helped to stabilize some depressed urban economies, many rural hospitals must rethink how they will provide future health care more efficiently to insure survival. The RIC health service is trying to provide the best information available to assist hospital planners and administrators, whether they are searching for information on more innovative health care delivery systems, on examples of successful strategies and partnerships, or on potential funding sources.

RIC NETWORKS WITH RURAL HEALTH GROUPS

In order to provide the best available health information for this new audience the RIC staff networks with several significant groups including the Office of Rural Health Policy, the National Advisory Committee on Rural Health, the Rural Health Research Centers, the National Rural Health Association, the state offices of rural health, and the National Library of Medicine. The Department of Health and Human Service's Office of Rural Health Policy (ORHP), since its establishment in 1987, has had as its major responsibility working with other Federal agencies, states, national organizations, foundations, and private sector organizations to seek solutions to health care issues and problems in rural communities.

At the Federal program and policy level the ORHP provides staffing assistance to the National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and advises the

DHHS Secretary Louis Sullivan, Congress, and other Federal agencies on the status of national rural health issues.

In addition to funding RICHS, ORHP administers rural health grant programs for the seven new Rural Health Research Centers and thirty-eight state offices of rural health. ORHP also provides rural health outreach grants and financial support to the National Rural Health Association for the production of publications, including the Journal of Rural Health.

The National Advisory Committee on Rural Health's function is to advise Secretary Sullivan on priorities and strategies to consider in addressing problems in providing and financing health care services in rural areas. The committee includes representatives of health insurance companies, private foundations, local and Federal governments, educational institutions, and the health care industry.

The committee is divided into three working groups:

- The Health Care Financing Work Group addresses the impact of Federal payment policies on access and availability of health care services in rural areas.
- The Health Services Delivery Work Group addresses such problems as the changing role of rural hospitals, inadequate emergency medical services, agricultural health and safety issues, and improving program coordination.
- The Health Personnel Work Group addresses problems associated with the training, recruitment, and retention of health care personnel.

The ORHP administers grants supporting seven rural health research centers at an annual funding level of nearly two million dollars. The centers conduct applied research in rural health issues. The specialized policy interests of the seven centers reflect the diversity of rural America. Some of these interest areas include agricultural health and safety; rural impact of medicare provider and physician payment policies; health care access for low income and dependent populations, including children, the elderly, the unemployed, the uninsured, the mentally ill, and the disabled; recruitment and retention of health care professionals; rural emergency medical services; health care services for rural minorities of the southeast and Hispanic-Americans and Native Americans of the southwest; quality and outcome of rural health care; and rural hospitals and personnel issues.

The National Rural Health Association is a national, non-profit membership organization whose primary goal is to improve the health and health care of rural Americans. Its diverse membership of more than 1,600 includes administrators, health care practitioners, planners, researchers, policy makers, hospitals, community and migrant health centers, state health departments, and university programs.

There are currently 38 state offices of rural health. The ORHP provides partial funding for the state offices which serve as the primary link to the states for dissemination of rural health care information.

RIC also networks with the National Library of Medicine (NLM) and NLM's national network of libraries of medicine. This network consists of eight regional medical libraries, 136 resource libraries, and approximately 3,300 local health science libraries. RIC focuses on providing information on rural health care issues and problems not on clinical medicine requests. RIC does not collect clinical information or operate as a consumer health hot line. RIC refers users requesting this type of information to an appropriate source such as NLM, an NLM regional medical library, or a specialized health information center.

RIC processes a broad spectrum of rural health requests, including questions on funding sources for health programs, services, equipment and capital expenditures; state initiatives concerning rural health care issues; uninsured or underinsured rural populations; closure, restructuring, and diversification of rural hospitals and clinics; agricultural health and safety; maternal and child health issues; innovative approaches to the delivery of health care services; and, distribution, training, recruitment, and retention of health professionals.

RIC's networking efforts with the new rural health groups has greatly enhanced the Center's access to and delivery of health care information nationwide. RIC is also obtaining pertinent health care and research publications from all the rural health groups and systematically adding them to the NAL collection and NAL's database, AGRICOLA.

RURAL INFORMATION REQUESTS

RIC was filling requests on rural health issues before the joint USDA-DHHS agreement to implement the health service at RIC, as previously noted, and, significantly, RIC's most successful known funding information request assisted a frontier hospital. This occurred in 1988 before the RICHS concept existed.

A New Mexico county extension agent discovered through first hand experience that the 36-year-old x-ray machine at De Baca General Hospital did not produce legible x-rays. Seeking funding assistance for the Fort Sumner frontier hospital, he called New Mexico's RIC State Coordinator who put him in touch with RIC. RIC supplied him with information about grant-seeking strategies and application procedures and identified a Federal grant program for which the hospital potentially could qualify. The county agent used these resources for the text and justification of a grant request to the New Mexico state legislature which approved a $260,000 hospital grant to De Baca General in 1989. Simultaneously the agent pursued the Federal grant. Five months after approval of the state legislature grant the Federal agency approved an additional $215,000 grant to De Baca General. With these two grants the hospital purchased a variety of hospital equipment, including some for intensive care and surgery. Some of the replaced equipment was more than 40 years old. The funds allowed De Baca General staff to update their medical facilities and provide improved health care to an isolated rural community located over 150 miles from the nearest urban hospital.

RIC's implementation of the health information service has had a significant impact on the recent change in RIC's requests and audience affiliation. Between fiscal years 1988 and 1989, 60% of RIC requests dealt with economic development and revitalization issues. In fiscal year 1990 41%

percent of the requests dealt with the quality of rural life and with concerns about environmental conditions, air and water pollution, and the preservation of natural resources. Requests on economic development issues were a close second at 40%. The breakdown of RIC requests since the implementation of the health service in fiscal year 1991 has been:

Health services	36%
Economic development	34%
Quality of life/natural resources	20%
Local government services	8%
Leadership	2%

In fiscal year 1991, 24% of RIC requests, cutting across all subject areas, was for funding information.

Likewise, RIC users remained fairly constant between fiscal years 1988 and 1990, with between 50% and 60% of all requests coming from the county, state, or Federal extension staffs. In fiscal year 1989 RIC experienced a significant increase in requests from individuals — from 4 - 11% — and has since held at about 11%. In fiscal year 1990 RIC experienced an increase in requests from local officials — up from zero percent to six percent — and is holding at that level. Since the implementation of the health service this past October RIC has experienced a 15% increase in requests from health care professionals and organizations.

RIC PLANS FUTURE FEDERAL COOPERATIVE EFFORTS

Now that RIC has the health service staffed and operational it will focus its attention next year on strengthening the access and delivery of rural information by the continuing promotion of cooperative efforts with both USDA and other Federal agencies.

The USDA Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) just approved the transfer of a funded position for RIC to hire a rural information specialist. NAL and FmHA are currently working on the administrative details and expect to transfer the slot shortly. In addition, the USDA Forest Service is exploring ways to fund a new position at RIC in fiscal year 1992.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) and their national SCORE (Senior Corps of Retired Executives) organization participated with RIC last year in a small business information pilot study in which SCORE and RIC identified user information needs as a result of the pilot and assembled an information packet of SBA and RIC materials for RIC to distribute to users seeking general small business and/or funding information.

RIC is currently working with SBA and the USDA Extension Service in another cooperative effort in rural information. Last year Congress passed legislation mandating that all three organizations — SBA, Extension, and RIC — provide rural program and development assistance information to rural citizens. However, to date Congress has not approved any additional funding to implement the mandate. As an initial step, RIC plans to expand rural information access, especially economic and health, on the RIC sub-board of NAL's electronic bulletin board, named ALF. RIC plans to load the yet unpublished 1991 edition of SBA's *Working Together: A Guide to Federal and State Resources for Rural Economic Development.* SBA recently provided RIC with the electronic file to load on ALF. RIC will set up an information resource file for each state on the electronic bulletin board. RIC also plans to load full text of all the titles from its *Rural Information Center Publication Series* which includes funding resource directories, Federal funding sources for local governments, publications on tourism, health, affordable housing, and historic preservation, to list a few.

In addition to RIC's plans to expand electronic access to rural information on ALF this fall, the RIC health service staff added nine bulletins to the RIC sub-board this summer. The bulletins include information on Federal and private rural health grants; rural health publications; national, regional, and state rural health conferences; and the Rural Health Research Center's activity reports and publications.

RIC is fortunate in that it came into existence as a high-level USDA initiative and Congressional mandate to meet rural information needs. RIC receives support from President Bush's rural economic development initiative and the White House Economic Policy Council Working Group on Rural Development, Congress, Secretary Madigan, Under Secretary Vautour, and Assistant Secretary Hill. Top level USDA officials view the success of RIC as an essential link in the USDA rural development program.

In spite of RIC's brief existence of less than three years on the national scene, it has been involved in several highly visible USDA and Federal rural development planning activities. RIC hopes that this visibility and participation in both department and interdepartmental-level Federal rural development planning initiatives will continue and that RIC activities will continue to impact favorably Federal rural programs.

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TECHNOLOGY: CRISIS FOR RURAL AMERICA

by

Kenneth P. Wilkinson

Changes in economic and political structures and innovations in technology are altering the social organization of communities in rural areas for better or for worse. In many small towns and open country areas, where past trends have produced severe problems of social well-being, the prospects for the future are clouded at best. Hopeful signs, such as development of communications technologies to address problems associated with distance and scarcity of settlement, are appealing, but as yet few of the potential benefits have been realized. In fact, it now appears that without intervention new developments could bring a further reduction in rural well-being rather than an improvement.

Intervention is possible, however, and with appropriate actions, rural development could build on the potentials presented by these trends to address old as well as newly recognized rural problems. Analysis of the forces shaping the future for rural communities and of the promise and perils attending the new technologies is needed to encourage and direct the needed interventions.

TELEMATICS

At the heart of the rural crisis, and a key factor in determining the outcome of the crisis, is a cluster of technologies referred to in recent discussions as telematics:

> Telematics is the joining together of telecommunications, broadcast media, and computer technologies into a single infrastructure for developing, sending, receiving, sorting, and utilizing information (Dillman, 1991: 292).

These two essential components of telematics - telecommunications and computerization - are changing the way we think about the meaning of rural space, and the convergence of these revolutions has far-reaching consequences for rural well-being (Dillman, 1991). A recent report of the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) entitled: "Rural America at the Crossroads: Networking for the Future" makes this point, but then cautions that unless the new technologies are deployed with care, rural communities are as likely to be hurt as they are to be helped (Congress of the United States, 1991). It is clear that the future well-being of rural America will be affected in crucial ways by the course of the current technological revolution in communications.

The technical core of this revolution is in the field of microelectronics, which has developed through a sequence of discoveries and inventions leading to the transistor in the late 1940s, the integrated circuit in the 1950s, the microprocessor in 1971, the microcomputer in 1975, and so on. The roots of this sequence go back several centuries to the dawning of the age of science and reason, but the pace of change has accelerated dramatically over the past two decades, as have the social consequences of these changes.

The major technological elements of this revolution and their potential for speeding the flow and increasing the volume of information exchanges are well-know. Fiber-optic cables, which carry up to two billion bits of information a second, dwarf the conventional copper telephone cables in capacity by a factor of up to 30,000 times; albeit at an installation cost per household of up to four times the cost of conventional lines (Ramirez, 1991). In combination with digital switches, which make possible advanced telephone services and computer-to computer applications, fiber-optic cables are channels of access to information and vehicles for participation in what has become a global network of exchange of goods, services, and ideas. Essential to full participation in this network are a number of specific services that currently are far from universally available, especially in rural areas, in addition to fiber-optic cables and digital switching. These include (see Parker et al., 1989) voice telephone service itself, which is still limited and often very expensive to provide and maintain in rural areas, single-party telephone access, reliable transmission of facsimile documents, access to competitive long distance carriers, local access to value-added data networks, 911 emergency service with automatic number identification, cellular telephone service, touchtone and custom calling services such as call forwarding, call waiting and three-way calling. Communications infrastructure also includes cable television, which along with telephone services, can be the basis of interactive transmission.

The range of applications is endless and these applications not only could affect, but are now affecting businesses as diverse as farms, pharmacies, travel agencies, and investment firms, along with voluntary organizations, governments, schools, and, of course, libraries. Telematics is essential for economic development and is a key element in the matrix of forces that determine and constrain social well-being.

RURAL AMERICA

Rather than dwell on the wonders of telematics and what it can do - matters well covered elsewhere (e.g. Parker et al., 1989) - I want to comment on the social context within which it is being developed and on the challenge it poses for rural community well-being. In a nutshell, I want to argue that telematics, as part of a fundamental restructuring of society, despite its benevolent aura (the aura of progress and instant access), poses a profound threat to rural communities; and I want to argue that only firm and concerted action by advocates for rural well-being (including those who provide rural library services, about whom I will have some special comments) can counter this threat; that on their own, rural communities haven't a prayer in the telematics society of the future.

As a first step, however, one must ask, what is rural America and how is it that telematics could affect it so severely? What is *rural* about America? Conventional definitions of "rural" emphasize agriculture or other primary industries; but by this criterion there is not much left of what used to be rural America. The farm population is only five million in a nation of a quarter of a billion persons and is less than eight percent of the rural population. A broader concept than farming is needed to describe the economic and residential diversity of settlements outside American cities. Two dichotomies, rural-urban and metropolitan-nonmetropolitan, denote differences in local population size and concentration. About 65 million people are rural and about 54 million live in nonmetropolitan counties. Strikingly, nearly half (45.9%) of the rural population is in metropolitan counties; and in fact more than a fourth of the farm population is metropolitan. Obviously, while a case might be made for talking about either the rural population or the nonmetro population as "rural America," we need to keep in mind that they are not the same.

Either way, though, we are talking about a large number of people - 65 million rural and 54 million nonmetro residents - even though few of them live on farms and even though many more Americans than these are urban or metropolitan.

A number of interrelated changes have transformed rural and urban segments of American society. One change mentioned earlier has been a sharp reduction in dependence on agriculture. In the 1800s, of course, farming was the typical way of making a living in all of America. Agriculture employed 71% of workers in 1830. By 1930, at the dawning of the technological revolution in agriculture, the percentage in farming was down to 21.2%. In the 1980s, as shown by data from the Current Population Survey (Series P-60, No. 166), farm employment was less than three percent. Significantly, there has been little change in this percentage since 1980, notwithstanding the farm financial and drought crises of the mid-1980s. It appears that the percentage of the national work force in farming has bottomed out and leveled off at just over two and a half percent.

Another view of this change is given by the current distribution of rural workers among major industry groupings (as of March 1989). Services now employ the most rural workers, followed by manufacturing and retail trade. In contrast, the traditionally rural industries - agriculture, forestry, fisheries and mining - now employ only about nine percent of rural workers.

As is well known, a major part of this transition occurred during the industrial invasion of nonmetro areas during the 1950s and 1960s. During this era, many firms sought and found abundant and relatively undemanding labor in the countryside. Among other things, this brought increased rural dependency on national and multinational systems and increased rural vulnerability to shocks in the larger economy. In fact, by the end of the 1970s, when a severe national recession put an end to the national manufacturing boom, rural labor markets, which by then were dominated by manufacturing, received much of the impact. Furthermore, rural areas were slow to benefit from the national recovery after the early 1980s, which was led by growth in service employment.

The nonmetro population turnaround of the 1970s and the return to the general pattern of previous decades is shown by plotting the percentage of nonmetropolitan counties with declining population through time. The sharp drop in the 1970s in this percentage represents the turnaround, and the rise through the mid-1980s shows the return to the old pattern.

Overall, the recent past has been a period of stagnation and upheaval if not one of outright decline for rural and nonmetropolitan America. Economic trends tell part of the story. Rural distress is the message clearly displayed in the graph of metro and nonmetro unemployment from the mid-1970s through the late 1980s. Prior to the late 1970s, unemployment was mainly an urban problem in the United States; rural labor markets experienced high levels of underemployment, but the unemployment rate was higher in large cities. The recession of the late 1970s-early 1980s changed all that. Nonmetro unemployment now exceeds metro unemployment and no relief is in sight.

With unemployment goes poverty and inequality, the quintessential human capital problems of rural America, although unemployment is not the only contributor to either of these. The geography of family poverty in 1988 (as reported in Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 166) identifies the two major poverty pockets in the U.S., namely central cities of metro areas where 15% of families are in poverty and nonmetropolitan areas with 12.9% in poverty. These are in contrast to metro areas outside central cities with 6.4% in poverty and the national total of 10.4% of families in poverty. National totals also show that there is little difference between the poverty rates for farm and nonfarm families but a large difference between metro and nonmetro families.

Poverty rates for families by race and Hispanic origin also vary by geographic location. Among major population groupings, the highest poverty rate is for African American families in nonmetropolitan areas (35.9%), and the next highest is for those of Hispanic origin in nonmetropolitan areas (31.7%). Thus, the problem of racial and ethnic inequality in America, which often is addressed only as an urban problem, has its most extreme manifestation beyond the metropolis in small towns and rural areas.

These statistics give ample evidence of the "social cost of space." An appreciation of this cost can help to clarify the contemporary demographic and economic situation in rural America and to interpret responses to the restructuring that is occurring in the rural economy. The trends overall show a pattern of rural distress, and this pattern, more than anything else, justifies the search for an effective approach to rural development.

The social cost of space is a factor in rural well-being worldwide. Surveys in many nations show that severe rural problems, such as poverty and inadequate services, tend to persist despite considerable rural economic development. Patterns of rural stagnation and decline are found in more and less developed countries alike. Upwards of three-fourths of world poverty, as indicated by income and/or nutritional statistics, is rural poverty. These trends show a complex array of rural problems and leave little doubt that space has social costs.

In the modern world, the social cost of rural space has three principal sources. The *friction of distance* inflates rural costs of goods and services and depresses rural access to needed resources. The *political economy of space* makes rural communities vulnerable to exploitation in the system of world capitalism. The *isolation of space* impedes community mobilization for self help. The upshot is a pattern of rural distress with four obvious components, namely *lack of jobs and income* to meet basic needs, *inadequate services* in either public or private sectors, *inequality* among communities and among different groupings of population within communities, and *depressed community action capacity*, which can be identified as perhaps the most insidious and potentially restrictive of all the problems now facing rural America.

The consequences of the social cost of rural space are seen directly in indicators of aggregate well-being such as poverty rates, absence of essential services, income inequality, and the like; but these direct indicators of rural suffering, important as they are, tell only part of the story. Society suffers also, not just its rural component. Societal consequences of rural problems can be seen directly in an analysis of indicators for the society as a whole which show instability and loss of opportunities for well-being and indirectly in an analysis of the direct effects of these problems on community interaction and viability.

The effects of rural conditions on indicators of well-being for entire societies are well documented, especially in studies of the United States. Demographic instability, reflecting changes in migration patterns, but also reflecting trends in fertility and mortality, is one such indicator. Rural and urban population totals have been rising and falling rapidly over recent decades in response to a number of changes. The changes have included boom and bust cycles in mining, forestry and fishing; the modernization of agriculture (i.e. mechanization of large-scale agriculture and the virtual collapse of small-scale agriculture); the changing geographic distribution of manufacturing industry; the shift to services as the growth sector of American economic life; and changing residential preferences of an increasingly mobile middle class. While a high level of demographic mobility might imply a high level of adaptivity in pursuit of changing opportunities, it also implies that society is unable to meet the needs of people in the places where their lives have been rooted in the past. Rural depopulation is of contemporary concern in areas such as the coastal fringe regions of Europe and the midwestern United States, and metropolitan concentration of population is a major threat to social stability in a number of nations. Similarly, population growth in excess of growth in access to resources and problems of infant and child mortality continue to threaten the stability of many societies and of depressed regions, such as the rural South, within societies. How do rural conditions figure in all this? The answer is quite clear: by and large, rural problems are the major causes of demographic instability in the world today.

Spatially-based hostilities between rural and urban sectors give another indication of the consequences of spatial inequality in access to resources. One school of thought sees the "spatial dialectic" as an essential feature of capitalist development and argues that capitalism creates a system of spatial animosity by using space as a tool in the struggle to exploit labor. Other writers reject the notion that space competes with class as the unit of conflict but agree that capitalist development, as it defines and manipulates local labor markets, takes advantage of, and reinforces inequalities and antagonisms between spatial units such as town and country, city and suburb, developed and less developed regions, and so on. Conflicts also are noted from other perspectives between rural and urban interest groups in rapidly urbanizing rural areas, such as in the prime agricultural area of the eastern United States. Case studies in many settings around the world have documented political, economic, and social problems that tend to arise at the interface between rural and urban sectors of society (see Wilkinson, 1989).

Rural-urban differences in social well-being also are recognized as a cause of a deficit in what some have called the "human capital" requirements for societal development. Low levels of rural educational attainment, limited employment skills and experience of rural workers, high incidence of health and mental health disabilities in rural areas and related conditions limit the attractiveness of rural labor markets to outside investors, especially in less developed regions where investments might be most needed (Beaulieu, 1988). Persistence of underdevelopment in these regions, coupled with the cost of transfer payments to them, retards the development of the society as a whole.

Social and psychological distress in rural populations, long ignored in policy on the mistaken assumption that stress is mainly an urban phenomenon, now is being recognized as a major threat to societal stability. In the United States, for example, the National Institute of Mental Health has established a new program of research on mental disorders in rural populations to respond to the evidence of "increasing stress for Americans living in rural areas" (United States Public health Service, 1991: 2). This problem has two prongs. One is the declining quality of life in small communities and open country neighborhoods which greatly increases the risk of personal and social disruption, and the other is the difficulty rural communities have in providing services because of high rates of poverty and the large geographic areas over which services must be organized. The upshot is a crisis of major proportions in the countryside and a clear threat to the well-being of both rural and urban segments of the national population.

The community, which I argue is the proximate setting for social well-being and the keystone of societal stabilization, is where these social consequences of rural problems converge and have their most serious effects. Demographic instability disrupts community relationships and can interfere with local social interaction in many and obvious ways. The spatially-based animosities that grow out of rural-urban inequalities can provoke conflict and separation where cooperation and contact are needed to solve problems that cut across rural and urban community segments. Deficits in rural human capital can prevent development of jobs and income in entire local labor market areas and restrain community efforts to find a niche in changing regional and world economies. The disproportionate incidence of distress in rural areas and the limited rural ability to respond with appropriate remedial services is a community problem, not just a problem of the individuals and families in small and dispersed settlements. The community, in its rural and urban dimensions, is disrupted by these consequences of rural deficits; and it is the community, therefore, that must be the focus of efforts to address these problems.

THE TWILIGHT OF HIERARCHY?

Enter the global information society with its base in the telematics revolution and its promise of a new set of rules about access to the resources that support social well-being! An essay by Harlan Cleveland (1985) in the journal, Public Administration Review, argues that the sudden dominance of information as a resource is demolishing established assumptions about the hierarchies that structure modern societies. Information, he notes, has several qualities that differ sharply from characteristics of resources that have been the basis of social organization in the past. In particular, he says:

1. Information is expendable.
2. Information is not resource hungry.
3. Information is substitutable.
4. Information is transportable.
5. Information is diffusive.
6. Information is sharable.

These remarkable qualities mean that, unlike energy and other physical resources, information is not subject to the laws of thermodynamics. Its ultimate purpose or use is to organize things or people, arrange them in ways that make them different from the way they were before" (1985: 187), and its unique qualities as a resource mean that it organizes things and people in new and potentially liberating ways. Thus, he says (1985: 187) about the past:

> The inherent characteristics of physical resources ("natural" and man-made) made possible the development of hierarchies of power based on control (of new weapons, of energy sources, of trade routes, of markets, and especially of knowledge), hierarchies of influence based on secrecy, hierarchies of class based on ownership, hierarchies of privilege based on early access to valuable resources, and hierarchies of politics based on geography.

And, he continues, in light of the ascendance of information as the basic resource of the future (1985: 187):

> Each of these five bases for discrimination and unfairness is crumbling today - because the old means of control are of dwindling efficacy, secrets are harder and harder to keep, and ownership, early arrival, and geography are of dwindling significance in getting access to the knowledge and wisdom which are the really valuable legal tender of our time.

The "passing of remoteness" as a basis of inequality, Cleveland maintains, is the culmination of these crumbling out-moded hierarchies (1985: 195):

> Once you can plug in through television to UN votes or a bombing in Beirut or a Wimbleton final; once you can sit in Auckland, or Singapore, or Bahrain and play the New York stock markets in real time; once you can participate in rule, power and authority according to the relevance of your opinion rather than the mileage to the decision-making venue - then the power centers are wherever the brightest people are using the latest information in the most creative ways.

This change in the fundamental rules of access, he argues, raises the prospect for people rather than places to be the basis of community. In a phrase with direct implications for the theme of this conference, he says (1985: 195):

> those institutions which exploit the electronic answers to remoteness may be "catching a wave" in the twilight of hierarchy.

THE INFORMATIONAL MODE OF DEVELOPMENT AND THE RESTRUCTURING OF CAPITALISM

A recent book by sociologist Manuel Castells, entitled *The Informational City* (1989), provides critical counterpoint to Cleveland's optimism. Technology, he reminds us, does not develop in a vacuum, but in the context of the structure of class and power relationships that define the capitalist mode of production. In agreement with Cleveland's analysis, Castells observes that the ascendance of information as a basic resource is associated with a fundamental restructuring of society. Castells' critical analysis, however, disagrees with the assessment that hierarchies are crumbling in the face of the liberating qualities of information and information technology. Quite to the contrary, he maintains, the accelerated development of information technologies is part of the quest for a new model of socio-economic organization that had to be established to achieve the basic aims of the capitalist system in the wake of the global political and economic crisis of the 1970s, those aims being, now as always (1989: 23):

> to enhance the rate of profit for private capital, the engine of investment, and thus of growth; to find new markets, both through deepening the existing ones and by incorporating new regions of the world into an integrated capitalist economy; to control the circulation process; and to assure the social reproduction and the economic regulation of the system through mechanisms that would not contradict those established to achieve the preceding goals of higher profit rates, expanding demand, and inflation control.

The new model of capitalism that began to emerge in response to the crisis of the 1970s, he says, has three major features, namely: (1) The appropriation of higher profits through higher productivity, lower wages, reduced social benefits, less protective working conditions, decentralization of production to regions characterized by lower wages and more relaxed regulation of business activities and dramatic expansion of the informal economy; (2) increased state activism in support of capitalist development; and (3) accelerated internationalization of all economic processes, to increase profitability and to open up markets through the expansion of the system.

In brief, Castells argues that the "informational mode of development" represents and contributes to the overpowering of labor by capital. Organizationally, he says, this leads to concentration, not to decentralization of knowledge-generation and decision-making processes in high-level organizations. It also leads to down-grading of the power of such groups as organized labor, that have agendas other than profit making, and to the transforming localities from communities into mere localities where labor and other resources can be sought and used to produce profits. Thus, from Castells' viewpoint, the information society is producing, not an end to hierarchies, but an increase in inequality, especially in rural-urban inequality.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Somewhere between the perspectives set forth respectively by Cleveland and Castells has emerged a body of literature by rural sociologists outlining specific impediments to realization of the potential benefits of modern communications technologies in rural areas (see Dillman, 1991; Wilkinson, 1989). A most comprehensive analysis of the "Non-technical Barriers to the Use of Telecommunications Technologies for Rural Development" is a report by Louis E. Swanson of the University of Kentucky prepared for the Office of Technology Assessment of the United States Congress (Swanson, 1990). In the report, Swanson observes that the factors that have constrained rural economic and community development in the past will continue to pose formidable barriers to utilization of telecommunications technologies to increase rural well-being in the future. These constraining factors include low educational levels, limited capital resources, cultural biases in favor of traditional economic activities, inadequate economic and social infrastructure, and other problems associated with the friction of space. These might be reduced but cannot be eliminated by the new technologies. In concluding his analysis, he cites four dilemmas that dampen the optimism that the new space-shrinking technologies will close the gap between urban and rural settlements in modern societies:

(1) Most rural areas are already far behind in gaining access to the new information technologies;

(2) Rural communities typically lack the specialized leadership and organizations that would be needed to take full advantage of new and highly specialized technologies.

(3) Rural acceptance of the new social patterns associated with new information technologies is likely to lag behind their acceptance in more urbanized settings.

(4) Nothing inherent to the new technologies assures increased social and economic equality; indeed, it is just as likely the new technologies will reinforce old patterns of metropolitan exploitation of rural resources.

TOWARD RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN TELEMATICS SOCIETY

Notwithstanding Harland Cleveland's optimism about the emergence of the community as people instead of the community as place in the information society, observers from many perspectives would agree that a major challenge is to retain and revitalize the local community. Castells, for example, who sees the suppression of places by a network of profit-seeking information flows as a grave threat to social well-being, argues that the trends can be reversed if localities can be helped in their quest to retain community identity and assert community interests as they move to take advantage of opportunities in the global networks. In particular, he calls for the mobilization of local governments, agencies and groups to seize control, as it were, of these opportunities. He writes (1989: 353):

> Citizens' data banks, interactive communications systems, community-based multimedia centers, are powerful tools to enhance citizen participation on the basis of grassroots organization and local governments' political will. On line information systems linking local governments across the world could provide a fundamental tool in countering the strategies of flows-based organizations, which would then lose the advantage, deriving from their control of asymmetrical information flows.

In other words, Castells sees a crucial role for what many at this conference would call library functions - certainly among the key library functions of the future - in empowering and facilitating community development and assertiveness in the face of powerful global forces that threaten to wipe out the local community as a force in the well-being of people. Swanson (1990), building upon this same theme, comments on the enormous but largely undeveloped advantage for development possessed by communities that have public libraries and institutions of higher learning. The community library can become a gateway to telematic society; and, of crucial importance, it can become an agency of community empowerment and development in an age and setting wherein community empowerment and development seem to be the last hope for rural well-being.

. The heart of the rural problem in modern society is that community development requires things the current rural trends do not ensure. One is that people must be able to meet their daily needs together in a local territory. Their localities must be local societies. Large rural-urban fields and space-free networks, which appear prominently on the horizon, simply cannot fill the bill on this requirement. Many needs can be met and close relationships can be maintained in these fields and networks, but only face-to-face interaction on a regular basis is conducive to community formation. Community arises only in local social interaction, and the crystal ball shows decreasing opportunities for local social interaction in the future of rural areas.

Another thing required for community is community action. This in turn requires opportunity and capability, the opportunity for people to participate in and lead collective efforts to solve local problems and the capability to do so effectively. The trends suggest that neither of these will be in abundance in the future of rural areas. Most of the decisions on big issues in the future of the rural settlements - issues concerning employment, the provision of services, and government regulation - will be made elsewhere leaving the opportunity for local actors to work together only on smaller issues. Capability means both the ability to mobilize and organize for action and the capacity to actually make a difference on the issues engaged by the action. Libraries can help build local action capacity.

Essential steps in the process of building this capacity are suggested in the extensive literature on community action and self-help (Wilkinson, 1991).

The first is to create the opportunity for people to participate, not simply as recipients or clients of the actions of others, but as the main players in the process of identifying and tackling community problems. Second, even with opportunities provided, rural community development faces the formidable task of overcoming the legacy of hegemony in rural-urban power relations and the pervasive quiescence of disadvantaged rural groupings (such as farm workers, small farmers, minorities, women, the poor, the elderly, and others) to the wishes and even the perspectives of more powerful groups. Overcoming rural quiescence requires education as well as opportunity. Third, there is the problem of rural organization. Traditionally, rural life is not highly organized, at least not formally; new modes of organization are required to break out of entrenched patterns of patronage and exclusion and to focus collective efforts on problems common to all local groupings. Mobilization of resources - local ones, such as people, ideas, materials, and money, but also resources outside the locality - is a fourth essential step. Informed decision-making is the fifth step (and here is where libraries can help best); rural participants in community decision-making need assistance in gaining access to the information and to the analytical paradigms necessary for making sound decisions about community goals and action strategies. Finally, the most important step is action itself: community action builds the capacity for subsequent community actions as it creates networks, roles and a pool of shared experience. The process of community development, conceived of as a process of capacity building, can be self-sustaining if all of these steps are possible. It is obvious to me as a general principle of rural community development - and others at this conference can spell out specific mechanisms for implementing this principle - that rural and small libraries must play a leading role in making sure these steps can be taken by community actors in rural areas. Libraries as community information agencies can contribute directly and substantially to revitalizing the community in rural America.

The information society, with its technological base in telematics and its global political economy, can be the twilight of inequality for rural America, or it can be the twilight for community in rural America. What will make the difference at this crucial juncture? One thing is the library. The community library can be a key player in deciding the outcome of the current crisis of community in rural America.

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